NATURE-TONES AND UNDERTONES

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NATURE-TONES AND UNDERTONES

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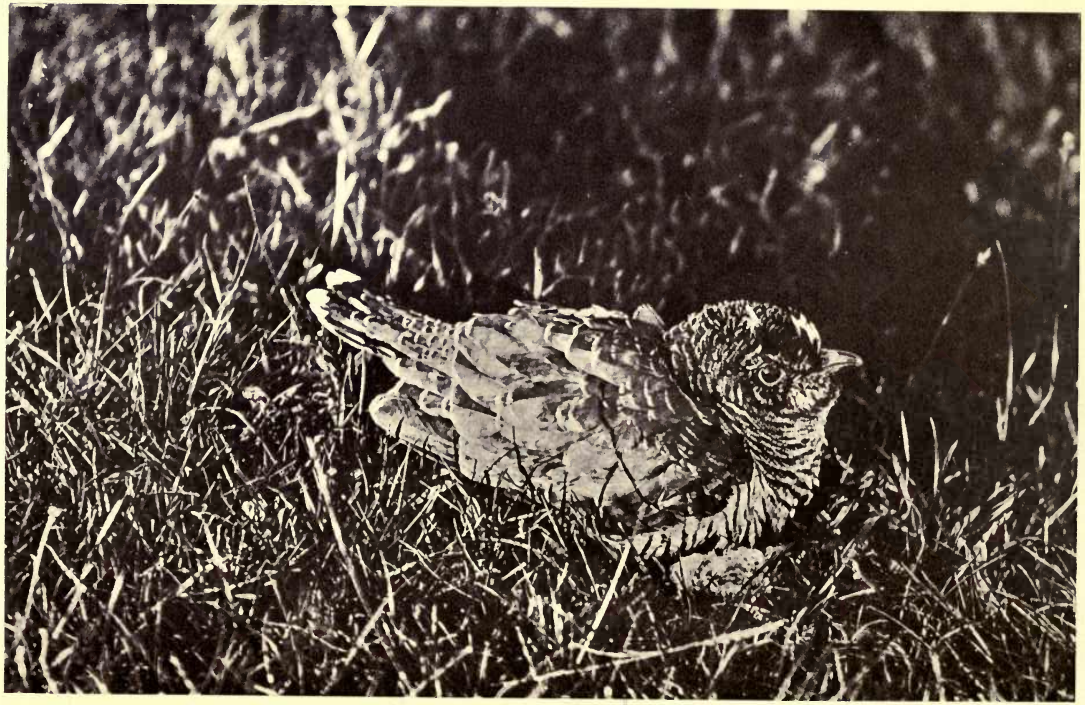

YOUNG CUCKOO
(about 16–17 days old)

NATURE-TONES & UNDERTONES

BEING SKETCHES OF LIFE IN THE OPEN ILLUSTRATED BY PHOTOGRAPHS FROM NATURE

BY J. MACLAIR BORASTON

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It would be ungracious on my part to fail to express in this place my indebtedness to the reviewers of my former work, "Birds by Land and Sea," for the cordial reception accorded by them to that book. I trust that in the preparation of the present one I shall not seem to have misapplied the stimulus an author must always derive from sympathetic and discriminating criticism.

J. M. B.

Stretford,
October 21st, 1905.

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CORRIGENDA.

Page 62, line 31, *for* "interst" *read* "interest."
„ 68, „ 27, *for* "tpyes" *read* "types."
„ 118, „ 15, *for* "statuesqe" *read* "statuesque."
„ 171, „ 1, *for* "same" *read* "some."
„ 173, „ 16, *for* "human" *read* "humane."

LLANDDWYN.

We had on former occasions pitched our camp at Beaumaris, in the island of Anglesey, working the coast and "hinterland" in search of bird-life as far as Red Wharf Bay, with the inclusion of Puffin Island by the way; and whilst engaged on this track we had observed several species of birds—Common Terns, Lesser Terns, Black-headed Gulls, Herons, Curlews, Redshanks, and others—which there was every reason to believe were breeding in the island, but whose nesting resorts we had not come upon in our northward search.

Of the first of these birds—the Common Tern—we had during the latter portion of May and the earlier days of June observed hundreds, recently returned from their southward migration, congregated upon the fishing weirs in the Menai Straits; and although we knew of a breeding station of these birds lying northwards—Moelfre Island, on the farther side of Red Wharf Bay—we had noticed during July birds of this species passing singly, with fish drooping from their bills, by an inland way over a high, wooded ridge at the back of the town of Beaumaris, upon a south-westerly course, evidently bearing food for sitting birds or young. Black-headed Gulls, too, though rarely seen at the north-eastern end of the Straits during the breeding months, appeared there in increasing numbers from the close of June, and were observed to come mainly from the south-western end, and to withdraw in that direction at

the approach of evening. Herons, frequently to be seen feeding on the Beaumaris flats, but less often encountered toward the north, lingered until dark, suggesting that their breeding haunt lay southwards, and at no great distance. Curlews and Redshanks, saving a few of the latter we found breeding in a walled enclosure towards Penmon, were less easily to be traced to their nesting sites by such observations; and of the whereabouts of the Lesser Terns, sometimes to be seen upon the coarse shingle also at Penmon, we knew no more than that it was not northwards, so far as we had ranged.

All this constituted an invitation southwards, and so, in the last week in June, 1905, having impressed the services of the bicycle in aid of our pursuit, we set off from Beaumaris—a company of three—with the extreme southern end of the Menai Straits as objective.

We were advancing along the Menai Road, cut along the flank of a wooded slope,—so that we had woods above us on the right, whilst woods below us on the left continued down to the waters of the Straits,—we were advancing by this road, and had barely cleared Beaumaris town, when we had to dismount. For first one, and then another, and yet another Mole appeared, all nosing their way along the foot of the rock that here walls in the road, having evidently toppled over the small escarpment from the woods above.

We had for a long time previously been without rain, and during the drought worms, the chief support of this animal, must have gone deeper and deeper into the earth, followed, as is their practice,

MOLE

by the Moles. But a slight shower having fallen overnight, here were the Moles above ground, more widely abroad than they can have desired, and scuffling along the wayside in their peculiar manner when placed upon a hard, flat surface.

Plump and able-bodied, they had suffered neither by the drought nor by their fall. But the unyielding surface of the road tried them. What they wanted now were flat feet and open eyes, to run and beware. But they had for all effectual purposes given up both to become blind burrowers in the earth, lured to degeneracy, it is to be feared, by the sinuous, succulent worm. Outwardly they have eyes—minute, bright points sunk in the fur of the head; but it would appear that the optic nerves no longer operate, since a lighted match held close to the Mole's eyes fails to affect it. Nor did any noise that we could make visibly excite them. Acute sense of touch and smell, however, resides in the delicate, mobile snout advanced far beyond the jaw.

The Mole exemplifies not only the natural law by which failure to use any member of the body results in degeneration and loss, but also the converse by which special use of any part further developes and adapts it. By forsaking life above ground, which its still present eyes attest it once to have led, it has become a blind burrower in the earth; but by the exercise of burrowing it has so modified its fore-limbs, that no one, picking up a Mole, can fail at once to be struck by their formation. Whilst the hind ones are small, of only ordinary strength, with the feet turned downwards for treading purposes, the fore-limbs, although short, are out of all proportion

stout and strong, the paws excessively broad and turned half outwards. Place the Mole on a hard, flat surface, and he will thrust his palms right and left, rolling awkwardly from side to side instead of making progress. But put him on moist earth, and observe with what dispatch the broad fore-paws rake aside the earth, the slender snout enters the incipient tunnel, and the cilindrically shaped body follows. With no eyes to be hurt and no external ears, with fur the short hairs of which stand upright like the pile on velvet, and cannot be rubbed the "wrong" way whether the animal goes forwards or backwards, he seems but some animated boring tool, all made to serve one purpose, except the little, furred, outstanding tail, that looks as if it had been stuck on as an afterthought without serious intention.

Handling the Mole in Anglesey, we call to mind that it is here at the western limit of its range. Occurring practically throughout Europe, in Asia north of the Himalaya, and as far to the east as Japan, the Mole arrived too late, geologically speaking, upon these western shores, to profit by the once existing land connection between England and Ireland, already sunk to form the bed of the Irish Sea.

Resuming our journey, we were soon again arrested by signs of the presence of another creature also rare in this western island. We had before found the Redstart nesting in the woods by the Menai Road, which, though rich in old, ivy-grown oaks, and such quaint holes and corners as these birds affect, are visited by only few of them, and yet by these few regularly.

Having wintered probably in Africa, the Redstart returns to us in spring by way of the south and east coasts of England, distributes itself throughout England and Wales, avoiding to a large extent the south-western counties of the former and thinning out as it spreads northward, whilst only a very small number pass over into Ireland. Whether the island of Anglesey, like the south-western counties of England, be a "thin patch" in the distribution of this bird, or its rarity there results from a lack of suitable nesting places, I will not attempt to decide further than by stating that the island of Anglesey, once called *Ynys Dywyll*—the Dark Isle, because of the shadow of its abundant growth of trees, was by the cupidity or stupidity of our forefathers denuded of such growth, so as now to be in a large measure a great rolling heath, with no notable collection of trees, save such as line portions of the shores of the Menai Straits or the slopes that overlook them. Here the Redstart finds suitable asylum, and three pairs, all with young out in the trees, were seen by us at this time.

The occurrence here of two cases of limited distribution, the one of the land-confined Mole, the other of the sea-crossing Redstart, challenges some sort of explanation.

In the case of the Mole, though geological evidence renders it sufficiently clear that the land passage from England into Ireland was at one time continuous, the fact that there exists no record of the Mole in Ireland testifies to its further westward progress having been barred by the influx of the sea, filling up the subsiding interspace and effectually separating the two countries.

But such a bar needed not to check the further western extension of the Redstart's range. Able and accustomed to pass the sea in flight, how comes it that this bird is very rare in Ireland? No one, judging by the Redstart's habits in England, could predict that it would find aught amiss in Irish surroundings. Indeed, the fact that it does not avoid that country proves that the locality is not at fault. Why, then, should the bird visit it in such small numbers?

If one observes birds even no further afield than in the neighbourhood of one's own home, it soon appears that the same classes of birds return to the same spots year by year. Indeed, it is not impossible at times to demonstrate that the same particular bird returns to the old spot. Migratory birds have definite winter quarters and definite summer quarters, and fairly defined paths between them. They do not wander—abnormal cases excepted—they travel, with a goal they know, when they see it. Thus birds return to a place because they have been there before.

The Redstarts that return to Ireland every spring go there because they have been there before. They are here on the western fringe of their area of distribution; and seeing that so few of them pass over into Ireland, it would appear to be by a comparatively recent extension of their breeding range. For if that extension had taken place so long ago as when land was still continuous from England to Ireland, there would in all probability be many more of them than are now found breeding there. It is highly improbable, however, that they would of them-

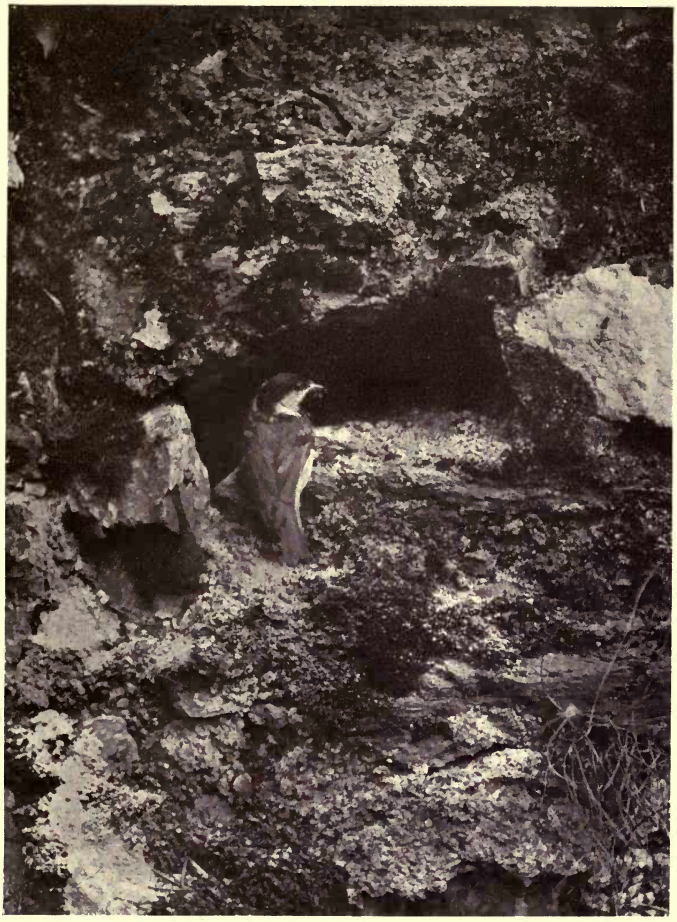
selves attempt the passage of an untried sea. Where birds now cross seas, it is, I think, always where land was once continuous, such birds having been gradually trained to longer passages as the sinking land widened the sea-breach. But, although evidence enough of extremely ancient land connection between this Anglesey and Ireland is afforded by the similar nature and strike of rocks appearing upon this very Menai Road and the Irish coast about Wexford, the most recent time at which it can have existed was the later Pleistocene. It is, therefore, all but certain that the few Redstarts now breeding in Ireland are descendants of birds that did actually essay St. George's Channel without having had experience of that route. This I should judge they would do in the company of birds of other species with an already established line of migration by that route, being stimulated by their example and numbers, just as animals of all sorts, including man, are easily aroused to strange courses if there be a large number of them gathered together under exciting influences, such as, for birds, are the circumstances attending the migratory flight. The rarity of the Redstart in Ireland, then, would appear to be due to the recency of the extension of its breeding range to that country.

The bicycle is not for all moods. A spirit of random rush sits on the cyclometer and whirls the tense spokes round. He has no regard for foreground and middle distance. What was present is past ere one has seen it; what was to come is here ere one is aware. No new species will ever be

discovered from the saddle of a bicycle. But give him a distant view or aim, with great indefinite things to be seen and done when one arrives, and your bicycle is no longer a vulgar roadster. The trees that glide backwards, and the rocks that slide away in optical dissolution are not scamped. We tell our pricked consciences we will come back on good neat's leather to justify our calling upon each of them. Not a bird or bug of them all shall escape our regenerate zeal.

But now another game is afoot. For, twelve months ago one of us by hazard heard the name "Llanddwyn"—a mystical last place by the sea, shut off by dreary miles of sand; a place of islands, the abode of Terns; and beyond, where mountain or ocean failed to fill the scene, a waste of marsh as far as eye might reach, where the marsh-birds called, and the sea came and went unmarked by any man, so lone a place it was. We had carried that talismanic disyllable inland, borne it about through winter and broadening spring, taking it out at quiet times, as from some mental wallet, to look upon it and turn it over and wonder what manner of place indeed this place should be. And now for nights past it had lain, a sleepless thing, half real, half visionary, beneath our pillows—Llanddwyn, the haunt of Terns, set between desolate marsh and distant mountain, sand-locked, girt by the sea. Inscribe such a name upon its wheels—the distant, the desired—and your bicycle becomes a very Pegasus.

We were therefore not over careful to observe the commoner forms—common as beauty—that had made this four mile strip of wayside woods their



COAL-TIT AT NESTING-HOLE

haunt. Commonest of all at that time was the Wood-wren, its measured "*Tin! tin! tin! tin! tin!*"—the metallic note of a titmouse rather than of a warbler—sounding from the higher trees all along the way, replaced not infrequently by the tinkling cascade of clear but hurried notes that makes up its song. Rarer than the Wood-wren was the Willow-wren, for it likes not packed woods, and if it nest there, chooses as a rule the fringe of them or some small clearing within. Titmice, Great and Blue, and at times the Coal, cried out shrill impeachment as we passed—"*'deed, he did it! 'deed, he did it!*"—followed by objurgatory churring at the enormity of what *he* did. The Wren, as usual, left his passage until the very last moment, then whirred low across our path, all but touching the wheels. How common the Wren is in these parts!—as common as in Ireland, as one might perhaps expect. Numberless Robins—red breast or mottled young—hopped from the low ivy-grown wall, of purpose set to challenge this riot of wheels, but flitted hurriedly back again, disconcerted by the unexpected audacity of our approach. Pied Wagtails, feeding on the road, yielded us length after length of way, in the end to be outdone and cut back behind us. Chaffinches, than which no more confident birds exist, barely escaped being rolled out, the young especially having apparently as yet no clear conception of the status of this modern centaur, half man, half wheels. Here, too, the Bullfinch might occasionally be seen, and the dolorous "*peep!*" of the Tree-creeper be heard. The Flycatcher shot out and snapped his bill audibly upon a fly, then returned to his perch to watch one pass with full,

dark, grave eye. A Starling, having fed her young, hung at the nest-hole on a tree-trunk, screamed at and screaming. And everywhere were Blackbirds and Thrushes without end.

If I mention all these common sights it is because in this journey of something over a score of miles, one passes from the most heavily wooded portion of the island through gradual degradation in vegetative growth until in the end a spot is reached where is neither tree nor shrub, but only low dwarfed forms that clutch the shifting sand and fight for life. And as the scene changes the birds change with it, old species falling out and new ones appearing, yet with overlapping of areas in some species, whilst others, present in the woodlands, face all changes, and are present still when at last bare rock and barren warren give place to the sea.

Before entering Menai the road curves sharply towards the left, exposing, after turning, the waters of the Straits. But here, at hand, is a mud-bottomed backwater lying off the main channel; and beyond a fish weir, two rocky islands completely covered by tall trees stand in by the wooded shore. The nearer of these is the Menai Heronry.

Here were born the Herons that frequent the shallows alongshore as far as the fish weirs some six miles further up the Straits. There, standing ankle-deep (a Heron's ankles are relatively about as far from his toes as are a man's knees), with neck craned stiffly out and the large bill as rigidly set, he is less interesting for what he does than for the length of time during which he will continue to do nothing. At the weirs, however, he needs at times display

more energy; for, being there far from home, he is regarded as an interloper, and if he perch upon the weir, gulls and terns, awaiting like him the fall of the tide, continue to harass him, hovering about and swooping at him with their solemn "*Ha! ha! ha!*" and shrill screams. But the Lesser Black-back, in the absence of the Great Black-back, brings a fiercer spirit to the fray; and after being bombarded from all angles, and writhing his long neck about to present his spear-like bill to meet the varying charge, the Heron ends by spreading his great hollow, rounded wings, and with legs drawn up and neck laid back between his shoulders, flaps low along the water in search of some less contested spot.

But at Menai the heronry has its own weir, and as the bird stalks along the gutters, intrusive gulls and terns know better than to come within striking range of the Heron at home. Here, when the tide is up, the birds may be seen to the number of a score or more perching for the most part outside the foliage at the tree tops—great white sentinels standing bolt-upright on long thin legs.

By clambering out on the larger island facing the heronry, one may sit and watch at no great distance these exclusive birds. "*Fraak!*" one will cry when he descries you working your way out; "*fraak!*" as you seat yourself upon the utmost projecting snag of rock; but, seeing you seated and mud and water barring off your nearer approach, he will desist from further demonstration.

I have known the Heron by land and sea a long time, but improve my acquaintance with him but

slowly. Inert, reserved, unapproachable, unintelligible, he is to a large extent to be described in negatives. Unintelligible, I find him, because there appears in many of his ways a strange inconsequence. Thus, as I sat there watching the birds, a moment before all still white statues on the dark background of leaves, they fell of a sudden into unaccountable excitement, lifting their huge wings, and uttering continuously sounds more like the jarring of worn-out machinery than cries issuing from living throats. Again a moment, and the white figures composed themselves, and all was once more statuesque repose.

Yet, be it never so ungainly, the figure of the Heron, by mere or marsh or sea, is the last touch and emphasis of solitude. Without it, or some such point of convergence, the scene remains but unpossessed expanse; with it, that solitary point of life, silent and motionless, focusses and transmits the spirit of the scene, and we have sense of it through him.

Passing through Menai, we bore westward along the Holyhead road, though Llanfair-Pwllgwyngyll (*vulgo* Llanfair-P. G.), Gaerwen, and on to Holland Arms. The road—a piece of Telford's work—from Menai onwards has little interest other than such as attaches to a broad highway sweeping straight ahead, often with miles of it in view, across the island, and rising and falling in broad curves as it crosses a succession of low ridges and hollows, all having a north-east and south-west trend, with a general dip of the land southwards.

This north-east and south-west trend is the

dominant feature in the landscape in these parts; the Menai Straits conform with it; the numberless low ridges are thus disposed; the great Malldraeth Marsh exemplifies it; the low rivers, finding no egress crosswise into the Straits, perforce follow a parallel course, and, like it, finally debouch toward the south-west. I was not surprised afterwards to find that this feature was a reflection of the fundamental geological plan of this district generally, and that, because of this, it found expression also in the distribution of the local flora. Further, the trend of the roads is likewise conditioned by it, so that in turning from the Holyhead into the Newborough road, we faced south-west, with a direct five-mile course to the latter point. In fact, one might almost say that the land had been "combed out" upon a north-east and south-west line, so much parallelism exists in that direction.

After leaving the wooded slope of the Menai Straits, the country became open, rolling grass-land, diversified by knobs of rocky outcrop and divided by hedgerows, almost treeless, and with only a sparse shrub growth. So it continued as far as Newborough, save that beyond the fields on our right lay the long, wide trough of Malldraeth Marsh, backed throughout by a prominent, parallel ridge of higher land; whilst on our left, the rolling grass-land dipped towards the Straits it served to screen, beyond which the mountains of Carnarvonshire were drawn out in unbroken line across the eastern view.

Upon quitting the wooded shores of the Straits, we likewise left behind Redstart and Wood-wren, Tree-creeper and Titmice, Chaffinch and Bullfinch.

But the Willow-wren, fragile creature as it is, has in it a strain of wildness, so that it pushes out into the open country, and is at home among the coarse grass and the gorse and the rock-crowned knolls. And here still, an unexpected Robin would start up from some sequestered corner, or a many-acred Wren rattle out its song in praise of isolation. Blackbirds and Song-thrushes, now joined by the Missel, dotted the green slopes, and found their account here in the open quite as well as in the Menai woods.

But with the barer grass-land a new set of birds appeared—Greenfinches in the hedgerows, Linnets on the gorse, Yellowhammers, and above all, Corn-buntings in unusual numbers stuttered and wheezed on all hands in those late June days. Though present, Skylarks were not numerous in what one might have thought to be very suitable ground for them, and only rarely one got up as we rode on, passing now by some rude cromlech, then a breached old round-tower by the way, down through Llangaffo, and so on into Newborough.

Newborough, as the word indicates, is a borough, a dignity conferred on it by Edward I., when it had lost its own. For Newborough was once Rhos-Fair, itself a seat of princes, princes of Wales when they were Welsh, and able to confer dignities on others, probably as ready to sink an old name in a new title. Rhos-Fair, which may be read Mary of the Moor, is said to have received its name from "the small church, dedicated to St. Mary, that stood at the head of the manor;" or, "according to Mr. Rowlands" (a learned antiquarian who, Mr. Pennant says, left his native place but once in his life), the name is

"more properly Rhôs Hîr" (Long Moor) "from its situation in an extensive marshy plain on the eastern side of the Malldraeth sands, and near a long dorsal ridge covered with heath."

Although the ridge and heath are still to be seen, and Saint Mary and her church are gone with the Welsh princes and their palace once standing here, it matters perhaps little, seeing the good folk of Newborough are content with their new name, the origin of which, truth to tell, lacks rather than suffers from obscurity.

If Edward I. conferred on Newborough an empty dignity, it suffered indignity substantial enough under George III. A large tract of land lying towards the sea, over which the inhabitants had exercised a right of common for pasturage and the gathering of turf, was then inclosed by Act of Parliament. Sea-grass, which the poorer of them had been wont to take freely for the making of ropes and mats, had thenceforth to be paid for; and to-day, albeit poverty squalid enough exists in Newborough, evidences of the old industry are few.

And now Newborough stands, last outpost and feeble protestant of a civilisation not its own, looking out over its common land become a desolate warren —miles of sand-billows with their marram crests, from which the wild west winds whip the driving sand-spray and cast it in her face.

A thriving Newburgher, more generous, perhaps, than wise, has returned to build for his native place a fine modern Institute strangely out of keeping with her fallen estate; and the hope is expressed that, by the introduction of electric cars, the tide of prosperous

vulgarity, which has done so much to make hideous the modest villages of our coasts, may set toward Newborough also. But the half of Newborough's lands are already beneath the sea; the other half is buried in sand; and the sea, they say, will have its own.

In the shrub-growth with which Newborough sedulously hides her nakedness, the birds made a last rally. But, long before reaching this point, the Willow-wren had found the limit of his hardiness, whilst the Linnet still kept abreast with the gorse; Greenfinch and Yellow-hammer fell behind ere the hedgerows ceased, although the Corn-bunting followed the grass. At last the Skylark only remained, until in passing through Newborough, we found a sudden congestion of bird-life, almost all the birds that had fallen out by the way reappearing suddenly here, rallying, as it were, in the last ditch; and, as we swung the gate that shut upon Newborough and opened on the Warren, a solitary Whitethroat gave us a churlish God-speed from the last sand-smitten bush.

Encumbered with bicycles that now all but rode their former riders, with a broiling sun above, and four miles of piled-up sand dunes before us—at last we were free. We had closed the gate on the world. There must still linger something of the nomad and savage in a man that he should feel this fierce exultancy in detachment, to look on unpeopled prospects, and to wander laboriously over pathless sands where the footprint vanishes with the lifting of the foot.

From the top of one of the higher sandhills

already we descried the distant lighthouse of Llanddwyn, the older light-tower, and to the right of the former, a Latin cross set on some eminence to take the eye by land and sea. One had need of some such sight ere delving into the next hollow, and clambering up the opposite slope to mark again lighthouse, and tower, and cross. There went with us a single telegraph wire, looped on tipsy poles that marked the course Llanddwyn-wards. We misjudged its purpose, and resented its presence, and, the day being young, declined its company or guidance, going south instead of south-west.

Frequently we came upon hundreds of snail shells collected upon small flat places in the sand, and the probable gatherers of them—Blackbirds and Missel-thrushes—might be seen at times in the patches of bracken that clothed the base of some rocky islet that cropped out through the sand. Here, for lack of other support, they were fain to build on stony ledges for the sake of abundant snails. A few pairs of Meadow-pipits kept them company, having nested in the bracken. Numberless rabbits pricked up their ears as we passed, then bolted, and with a flash of white scuts vanished into their burrows; for this was a warren indeed. The only other quadrupeds were a flock of half-wild sheep; lithe, sinewy, elegant creatures, with deer-like gait—unlike the stodgy mutton of our plains—that scaled a sand dune as one might storm a fort, and capered like goats. And one bird, separated by the breadth of the whole island from its fellows of the Penmon warrens on the northern shores, appeared here suddenly and in great numbers. The Wheatear was everywhere, starting from

burrows it shared with rabbits, and running so rapidly and on so sustained a course, that few people could have detected that it did not truly run at all, but hopped. With head and breast so depressed that it must needs topple forward on the ground but for the rapidly recurring hop, it follows a long course, like a running Ringed-plover, at the end of which it stops suddenly, and standing almost upright, rocks its tail and bobs its head. Then with a quick traverse, it repeats these gestures, ere it scuds in low flight above the ground, its white tail and hind parts marking the line of its retreat.

Occasionally we came upon levelled areas such as only water leaves, covered with a flaky sediment, itself blotched with highly coloured lichens. Here the Lapwing bides; the sand is not for him. Here, too, the carrion crow comes in ones and twos; he cares not for company. He is so used to being alone that when one appears on a ridge overlooking his haunt, he seems for a moment to doubt one's presence; then, as with sudden conviction, he gathers himself up with a loud "*Kaar!*" hugs the flat as he flies, and cutting up the face of a sandhill, doubles down beyond, and comes not again to earth within half a mile.

If, upon entering the Warren, I had been asked what birds I should be likely to meet there, I should scarcely have said the Nightjar, Frequently as this bird occurs in the higher, heath-like tracts of Anglesey, I should not have expected to flush it from bare sand among the dunes. And yet, coming over a ridge, I put up a pair that had couched in the sun upon open sand. Without sound of alarm, one

after the other rose and, with strange, chopping flight, cleared a breach in a neighbouring sand ridge, and even as they did so, one might note the sudden cut aside with which they changed their course as they passed from view. I never become used to the Nightjar; it remains for me now, even as when first I knew it, a weird, unbird-like creature, one that might brood its wonderful marbled eggs where ruined arch and column strewed the site of some forgotten shrine, or perch at night in roofless aisles to utter its unearthly reel, itself, as it well might seem, the relic of an age with which the canon of its strange music lapsed in common oblivion.

In striking off from the telegraph wire, which, as we afterwards learned, served upon occasion to summon to Llanddwyn the Newborough portion of the life-boat crew, we made for a long sandy shore appearing on our maps, intending to reach Llanddwyn by a straight dash on wheels, if the sand should prove to be in condition.

That telegraph wire had vengeance upon us. For hours we stormed citadels of sand at the double, dragging reluctant 'cycles to the ridge tops, ourselves to be as impetuously dragged down again by them on the farther slopes.

There is a fine dispassionateness about an ordnance map. However often and in whatever mood I examined mine—in doubt, amazement, or sheer disbelief, the distance from Newborough to the stretch of sand toward which we were heading, was always the same—two miles. Making all allowances for two additional miles performed more or less on the perpendicular, there remained unaccounted for at

least four miles, for which probably no respectable cartographer could have been found to make room between his coast lines.

As I am loth to believe that we advanced by a series of re-entering circles, I can only conclude that those four visionary miles were in their character intensive rather than extensive, the result of a recurring belief that every sandhill was the last, disillusionment as frequent imparting a sense of endlessness to our progress; and endlessness is modestly stated at four miles. Be all that as it may, let ordnance surveyors reconnoitre warrens on wild horses if they will, but let them take no 'cycles. They excite the imagination, impair the judgment, and confound geography beyond rehabilitation.

Yet in the end we had vengeance of that vengeance. For, when we had scrambled up one of those ever-recurring last ridges, unaware of impending deliverance, a Ringed-plover piped out from an enclosed patch of shingle below, and we knew that the last of those last sandhills had been passed.

A moment later we stood on the shore, with Llanddwyn island, not visibly detached from the mainland, clutching the waters like a rocky claw on our extreme right, and the long, narrow spit of the North Sands balancing it on our extreme left. Between these stretched the curving sands of the shore; before the sands the sea, and beyond the sea the piled-up mountains of Carnarvonshire—Snowdon and Mynydd Mawr, Garnedd Goch and Mynydd Craig Goch, the mountains about Clynnog, and Yr Eifl's triple peak, last of this giant brood, shadowing the south.

There hangs, for me, an air of mystery over all unpossessed spaces, particularly open spaces, which, being disclosed in their whole extent, declare themselves at once unoccupied.

Blackstone has truly observed that there is in mankind a natural disposition to regard as right that everything should have an owner. It may therefore be considered a triumph of righteousness that it is in these days hardly possible to look upon land without having obtruded upon one's notice the personality of some land-owner. Hence a habit in the social mind to seek in scenes of solitude signs of human occupation, and finding none, to return into itself uneasily, as if with a feeling that the general fitness of things had been disturbed.

Emerging from that curtain of confused sandhills suddenly upon a clearly marked scene of absolute detachment, wherein was no sign or suggestion of human presence or possession, I, too, experienced some such feeling, though one that was analogous rather than similar. For I think that there persists in the minds of some a feeling of remoter origin, of which Blackstone's comment touches but the material aspect—a feeling that such scenes, in spite of their seeming loneliness and aloofness, do not exist solely in and for themselves. There is a natural disposition in the mind to conceive of them as being reflected in the consciousness of some being ; and to transfer the peculiar unity, suggestive of the unity of personality, that often pervades them, to some spirit of the spot, imagined as intimately mingled with and animating the material elements that suggest its presence.

Some such feeling held us silent as we looked

right and left around that bay, waiting for sound or movement of some sort to break the stillness of the scene. But there was no movement save the world-old movement of the sea; and no sound but the call of sea-birds and the soft seething of the long "combers" on the sand.

We had set out with the intention to push on straight to Llanddwyn whatever obstacles might present themselves; we had gone aside to find, as we thought, a speedier way; and now, with all obstacles passed and the goal in view, we said: "The day is hot, but the bay is cool, and the sun has far to go. We have pushed and pulled, and swinked and sweat; why shall we hurry when no one waits, and the sea and the sun wait here?"

No man is bound to enjoy himself from a sense of duty, least of all such as have whiled in the land of the lotus. The land where it is "always afternoon" may be a figment of the fancy, but not a few have been there. For it is a mood rather than a place—the mood that impels one to enter fair ways that lead nowhither; to follow the sunset; to push on out into the open when one is far from home, and moon and stars hold the midnight sky; to be the fool of a fancy that has its own folly for reward.

Looking back upon that time, I see as in a picture mountain and shore and sea, and creatures that should be human where no other human creatures are. Maybe they are of the sea; for where one rocks outstretched upon the water gurgling about his ears, a flickering Tern hangs for a moment in the empty blue above him, then screams and passes on; or maybe of the land, if the strange biped peddling

YOUNG OYSTER CATCHERS

furiously down-wind on firm-set sand to head off low-flying Waders, did not, having accomplished his purpose, at once betake himself, without need to cast any superfluous garment, to the other element.

In his careering he has caught a day-old Oyster-catcher,—a toddling ball of mottled down that, when put to it, holds its head high in air and runs with untutored swiftness. Runners, almost from the shell, are all his kind; birds that feed by the sea continually, circling out over the water when disturbed, but, without attempting to settle upon it, circling back again to land. Running birds are land birds; to be born runners from the shell, Oyster-catchers must long have been birds of the land. This day-old chick, when driven to the water's edge, cried out for fear and sought escape toward the land; but when cast bodily into the sea, he sank, to rise at once and, sitting the water as squarely as any duckling, swam ashore. Why should an Oyster-catcher swim? Upon what ancestral fund of swimming craft did this young Wader draw so late a draft? And, swimming instinctively, why should it have an aversion, equally instinctive, from water, using inherited powers only under compulsion?

The sun had passed well to westward ere we resumed our journey, leaving the bay to Oyster-catcher and Ringed-plover nesting at intervals along the shingle, and much disturbed by our invasion of their retired haunt.

In proceeding, we crossed the track of Sheldrakes leading from the sand hills to the water, and afterwards descried well out in the bay a close line of just a score of young Shelds swimming on a broad

front, an old bird at each end of the line serving to enclose as between quotation-marks this lengthy extract from the family register.

Sixteen, as far as I can gather, is the limit usually assigned to the number of eggs laid by the Shelduck; but, having upon several occasions seen this family, and, with one of my companions, counted the young ones for greater security with a field-glass, I am sufficiently assured that a brood may consist of twenty. Whenever seen upon the water—and they were generally there at full tide—the birds were always in the same formation—the young spread across singly in a straight line, with an old bird at each end.

Strictly speaking, Llanddwyn Island is a peninsular, accessible from the mainland by a short, narrow, low approach, but otherwise sufficiently distinct as a compact mass of rock from any sands lying about its landward end. Something over half a mile in length, and less than a quarter of a mile in breadth, it rises nowhere higher than fifty feet. Its coasts are of hard, slaty shale, steep at some points, and at two places breached by gravel-bottomed inlets, but everywhere above jagged into numberless points and blade-like edges. The centre of the island is a small valley, treeless and shrubless, unless dwarf brambles and wild rose are to be accounted shrubs, lying, as they do, flat to the sandy soil, their full-sized blossoms appearing strangely large as they look up straight from a mat of diminutive leaves. For the rest, a coarse herbage, relieved by patches of bracken and sheets of massed pansies, makes a pleasant sight for one just arriving from over the Warren.

LLANDDWYN : COMMEMORATIVE CROSS

Entering this central hollow, one is arrested by two crosses, prominently placed—one nigh to a ruined church, the other high up on the headland where, with the lighthouse, it dominates land and sea.

Here there is no other evidence of human occupation saving a strip of kitchen garden, jealously wired in, and the telegraph wire that runs past it and the church and the crosses to the lighthouse, where its business is. A disused well, choked with stones, speaks, like the ruined church, of occupation that has ceased. Pious hands have raised the nearer cross to commemorate it. Inscribed in Welsh and English, it informs the wayfarer arriving from the mainland, and perhaps serves also to remind the few inhabitants, Welsh Protestants though they be, that:—

"THEY LIE AROUND; DID LIVING TREAD
THIS SACRED GROUND: NOW SILENT, DEAD."

I knew the story of the Benedictines who made this lonely place their retreat. It was a beautiful action thus to mark the spot, otherwise unmarked, where they rest—beautiful, because the time in which they lived was, like our own, full of excess, and the extravagance of one age is, as a rule, intolerant of that of another.

Passing on into the small rock-sheltered flat that lies immediately inside the headland, we entered the world of to-day, a small world of four families housed in a row of as many cottages, the families being exclusively those of the pilots of this station, Llanddwyn existing now solely for the sake of the beacon erected here, and for the piloting of vessels across the dangerous bar of Carnarvon. Some of the cottagers,

now parents of numerous children, had been born there, scarcely leave the spot except to make a journey on donkey-back to Newborough for the purchase of living necessaries, and, as they said, quit the place only to return to it at the earliest opportunity. The man of "light and leading" there was the senior pilot, who had in his time sailed the Pacific, and with him I was able to crony over common experiences in that region, a further bond of interest being his ability to count in Spanish up to a hundred, for he had tallied cargo in his day; but for the sake of the shipowners it is to be hoped that he had not then his present habit of passing from four to six by the omission of five. I had hoped to gather from the inhabitants further information concerning the history of Llanddwyn and its doings, but upon such matters they were quite uninformed, and uninterested in them.

In the early evening a strange creature appeared coasting the outer rocks,—a bird, as it seemed, boldly marked with black and white, progressing on the water by using its wings with a violent paddling action. It thus proceeded in frantic haste, but apparently without settled course, tacking hither and thither as it went.

"'Looks like Penguins," said he of the Pacific, and the remark was apt, though it involved a confusion of species (Penguins and Auks) once endorsed by wiser men than he.

Losing sight of the bird among the rocks, I feared that it had passed on, leaving yet another of those unexplained incidents that serve to tease the mind so long and to so little purpose. But an hour later

LLANDDWYN

I caught sight of it again rounding the rocks at the entrance to the principal cove, and as it appeared to be heading landwards, I went down to the water's edge for a better view. Continuing its violent paddling, the bird flapped along the water directly towards me until I was able to see that it was a Common Guillemot, using its wings for progression upon the water as it uses then when fishing beneath it. I remained quite still, and a few minutes later it was cast up by the sea on to the shore a few yards from the spot where I was standing, and lay, inclining sideways, on the gravel, its feet being doubled back under its body.

Passing between the bird and the water, and placing my cap upon its head, I secured it, and bore it above. My Pacific friend informed me that Guillemots are frequently driven ashore here during rough weather in autumn, and lie on the sand until the following tide refloats them ; for the bird has no power to take wing from the ground, but requires to launch itself upon the air from some higher rock, or to gain a start by means of such support as the water affords it when, beating it laboriously with its wings, it rises from the surface of the sea.

Upon examining the Guillemot, I found on the belly a large, semi-circular abrasion, such as might have been made by the lower jaw of some big fish. The place was inflamed and cleared of plumage, and the mark so disposed as to suggest that the bird had been gripped from behind up to the middle of the back and belly, the back having been defended by the stouter plumage, The legs and feet were powerless ; and, when the bird was placed in water, unless

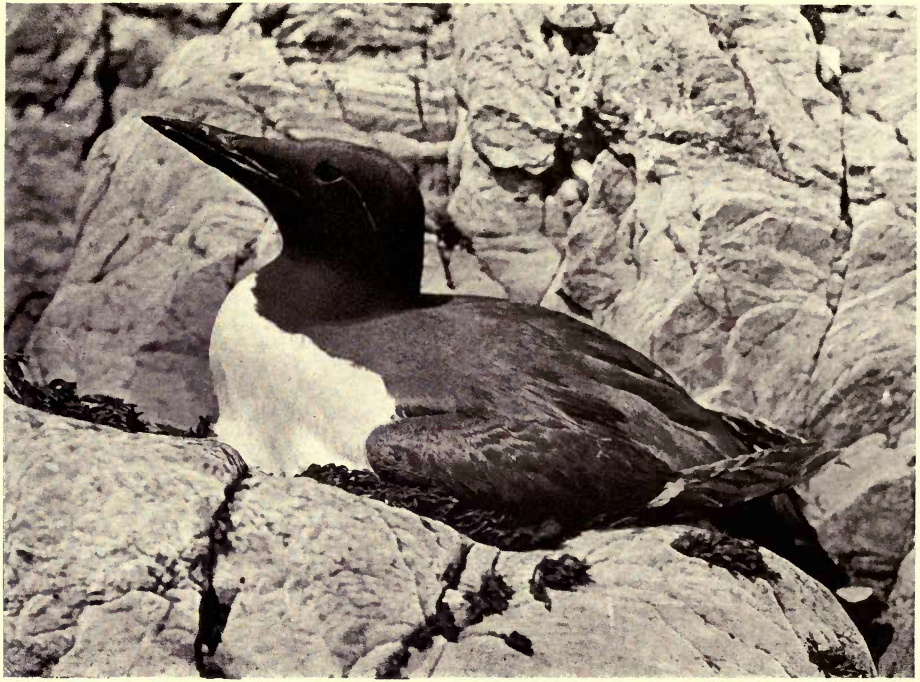
it maintained itself by paddling with its wings, it canted so much to one side that it had to strain its neck round to save itself from being drowned.

It is only when one comes to carry a Guillemot, and to note closely how little of its bulk is made up of its close, fine plumage (that of the head and neck is as smooth and fine as silk), that one realises how heavy a body its small wings have to support and propel.

It was a mature bird, remarkably tame, and quite content to be held in arms, though resenting any attempt to touch its head by a rapid stroke of its great, jag-edged bill. It was indeed a fine-looking creature, with something of swan-like dignity in the bearing of head and neck, but, if I can make myself intelligible in saying so, with a strangely impenetrable eye.

There are some eyes the expression of which one grasps at once, feeling that one has understood ; the leer of an alligator, the still cat's-eye of a snake, a parrot's eye with its quickly contracting and dilating pupil, the eye of a horse, a dog, a hawk. There are others, like those of sheep, as meaningless as they are beautiful. Others again that, whilst full of expression, leave one looking into them as into a dark place ; for they seem to express something for which one has not the clue or symbol. Of these last is the eye of the Guillemot, rendered stranger by the peculiar little curtain of skin that is drawn forward over a portion of the eyeball.

Having kept the bird in some comfort overnight, I placed it on the sea the following morning, where it paddled out with seeming gladness into the open



COMMON GUILLEMOT

with the old strange motion, but whither bound the bird itself knew probably no more than I.

As hard a question to solve was, "Whence had it come?" No Guillemots come to Llanddwyn during the breeding season, and the nearest breeding stations are, I believe, Puffin Island, twenty miles to the north-east, and Holyhead, sixteen miles to the north-west.

Going up to inspect the larger cross on the headland, I found it to be inscribed with the word "DWYNWEN," and seeing that this fair saint had to wait for the erection of her monument from some time in the fifth century until the year of the Jubilee of Her late Majesty Queen Victoria, the author of this graceful, if tardy, act of recognition, paid both St. Dwynwen and her countrymen a doubtful compliment in recording the fact upon it. The ruined church in the hollow below is an earlier memorial.

Dwynwen, daughter of Brychan Urth, and afterwards to become tutelar saint of lovers, founded a monastery in this place during the fifth century, and here eventually she was buried. "Here were constant lights kept," says the chronicler, "at the tomb of this virgin saint, which brought no small gain to the monks from the pious and superstitious people who visited it from all parts of the kingdom in those times of popery; for the whole machinery of that delusive church, and the juggling arts of mercenary priests, were in this remote corner collected together, and made use of to impose upon an ignorant and misguided populace."

The "juggling arts" consisted in the foretelling

of destiny by means of the leaping of fish (they leap still—bass, I think—I have watched them by the hour from the rocks), and the appearance of the water of a well, stilled called Ffynnon Vair, or St. Mary's well—probably the one now choked with stones.

In Henry IV's time, the income of this monastery was greater than that of any other religious house in North Wales; and in Henry VIII.'s survey it was the richest prebend in the Principality. Now, not only does the place that knew it know it no more, but the very spot where it stood is itself unknown. "Soon after the Reformation," we are told, "it was despoiled of its timber and lead, which the neigbouring families converted to domestic uses." So the new fury drove out the old, and if the priests before the Reformation despoiled the people, the latter were afterwards not so reformed but they used the occasion to despoil the priests. How little the Welsh in their most representative class had been influenced by the moving principle of the Reformation, I had ample opportunity of observing when present upon several occasions at mission services conducted by the revivalist, Mr. Evan Roberts, about this time in the court-yard of the ruined castle at Beaumaris.

A great concourse of people, largely of the lower middle and peasant classes, took place, many coming in from distant parts of Anglesey, and from the mainland. Many English visitors, too, were present, and were said to exercise a restraining influence upon the excitement that had had freer course at previous gatherings in other places. Even so, the scene I witnessed there is paralleled in my memory

by only one other,—that upon a boat when with many other people I stood in imminent danger of shipwreck.

The meeting, timed to begin in the early evening, was taken in hand by a Welsh minister who acted as director of the mission, supported on the platform by about fifty men of respectable, but not very intelligent appearance, who were called "stewards," and wore white rosettes in their buttonholes in token thereof.

The revivalist had a habit, which upon these occasions he practised to the full, of allowing the meeting to be wrought up into a state of fervour by his coadjutors, ere he appeared with somewhat dramatic timeliness to gather the harvest of their labours.

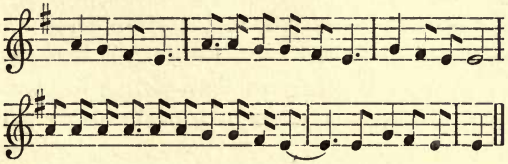
Before his arrival there was much singing, with the fervour and fine musical balance one may demand of the Welshman; for music is largely born in him. Then followed the repetition of the Lord's Prayer, phrase for phrase, not with the apologetic whisperings of the Saxon churches, but with something like the roar with which I have heard prayers recited in Jewish synagogues, when the rafters also perforce made declaration of the faith.

Then that spirit of excitement which before the meeting had manifested itself on the roads converging upon Beaumaris in the set, heated faces of pedestrians coming in from the outlying districts, in the spring-cart bringing down the farmer with his family from the hills, and in cyclists racing along the high-road strangely clad in black broadcloth whitened with dust, at last found full vent. Single

voices began to quaver out almost like the bleating of sheep, increasing in number and force as at one point or another new suppliants broke out in spontaneous and simultaneous prayer. Some were shrill voices of women, others the deeper voices of men. Some, hurried on by emotion which outstripped their powers of extemporary speech, repeated endlessly the same words, the same cry; others, of readier speech, were quickened to freer utterance by their fervour. One man, apparently beside himself, bellowed inarticulately in stentorian tones. Uproar, confusion reigned. One woman wailed unceasingly, her piercing cries ringing round the old courtyard, and the rhythmic clapping of her hands declaring that she had passed into a limbo of hysteria. Women fainted and were carried away; men collapsed, spent and exhausted, in the arms of comrades who supported them. Any unusual outburst of emotion was greeted by the leaders of the mission with a loud laugh, the intention of which was doubtless to offer encouragement, but the mode of expressing it jarred upon one, as well-meant but coarsely extended sympathy will jar. The scene sickened and disgusted me; and this stimulation of excitement, which had at times something bestial in its fury and self-abandonment, seemed equally brutal, and, in persons themselves almost unmoved, culpable.

I must add, however, that when the confusion arising from simultaneous prayer and discordant cries threatened to carry the meeting beyond control, the director would override those who were declaiming by causing a hymn to be sung, himself giving an address, or by "testing" the meeting, this last

consisting in frequent calls for those who were members of any church whatever, to raise their hands, those not raising them becoming objects for the attention of the "stewards." When any of the latter could claim a convert, his name and address were called aloud, and the meeting acclaimed the event with a verse of thanksgiving specially used for that purpose, sometimes repeating it as often as a dozen times in succession.

During the period of greatest excitement, there grew up from the discordant cries and clapping of hands a strange, surging recitative of four notes repeated with varying phrasing—four notes of a minor scale, the manner of using which is illustrated in a general way by the few bars that follow :—

The spell of the melody asserted itself; less melodious sounds fell away and ceased. Then for several minutes the new voice alone rose and fell—rose to the sub-dominant with force and fervour, clinging to it, as recognising instinctively the peculiarly supplicatory effectiveness of importunate insistence upon a note in itself characteristically transitional. For the notes that followed during the descent to the tonic were less precatory in their unrepeated brevity, being suggestive, rather, of spiritual dejection and prostration.

After that a woman's voice ranged over the

failing voice of the man, using the same four notes in the same manner, but transposed into a higher key, until, in the fervour of her appeal, her voice travelled a tone above the conventional range (for this mode of expression is usual with the Welsh) and striking the full dominant, rang out with electrifying effect—the boldness, as it seemed, of a commanding despair. For these people were terribly in earnest, as others before them had been even horribly so.

Nearly two hours from the opening of the meeting, the revivalist entered unobtrusively, but with a strange appearance of haste as he divested himself of his coat, considering he had taken so long to come. Without any affectation of clerical attire, his appearance had in it nothing unusual, unless it were a mass of dark hair worn long as is the manner of certain artists. He appeared to be a young man of twenty-six to twenty-eight years of age, was fairly tall and squarely built, with somewhat heavy features but expressive eyes, square-browed and firm-lipped—features that had come of the working stock of the land, but had taken on a certain pallor and refinement of their own, which lay like a glove on a strong hand. For the man is at bottom a strong man, of a masterful, even imperious, temperament; and as he stands there facing the people, his captains about him become insignificant, and he assumes command as by natural right.

But it is of this very masterfulness that his weakness is born. Speaking excellent Welsh with the voice, gesture, and power of a born orator, he evinces an impatience and a coercive spirit which, being crossed by any lack of responsiveness in his auditory,

become petulant and even hysterical, leaving upon the beholder the impression that there has been a great effort rather than a sufficient power. At times, he will sit silent for a couple of hours after his arrival, though knowing that the people are assembled especially to hear him; then, in the pauses of incisive upbraiding, shake his closed right hand impatiently with a motion that looks as if he were rattling half-pence, in the end sitting down with a gesture of mingled resentment and despair, and flinging his arms out over the table before him, bury his face, and remain so, maybe for an hour or more, or until all is over.

And it is these traits of weakness and idiosyncracy that largely attract those who flock to hear and see him. Entering when he likes; rising when he will, or not at all; now caressing his beholders with a peculiarly winning smile that has in it something delightfully child-like, now almost minatory as he snaps out curt, crushed-up phrases of reproval; at one time lashing himself visibly into a tempest of emotion, at another sunk in his seat, inert and distraught, he is an object of fascinated sympathy to many who, like himself, come of a race that, whether heathen, Catholic, or Protestant, remains the same,—emotional rather than rational, with a feeling for the mysterious rather than for the true, the dreamy Celt as distinguished from the practical Teuton.

So that it was perhaps not unfitting that even in these times St. Dwynwen should have received her monument in Llanddwyn. For, although by an accident of geography, so to say, Wales has become

Protestant, wherever else peoples derived from Celtic stock exist, they are firm adherents to the Church of Rome,—the Church essentially of the emotions. And although Protestant, and therefore of a church that became such as a protest of reason and liberty of conscience against ecclesiastical domination, Wales, true to her old instinct, deepened the lines of her dogma, inclining to the sombrest and least individualistic of the forms of Protestantism, and importing into her religion an emotionalism characteristic of the church she left, rather than of that to which she came. The bitter antagonism of the Welsh towards "popery" may perhaps be illustrated by the mutual repulsion of similar polarities. For, speaking ecclesiastically, Rome was defrauded of Wales, and it remains an anomaly on the page of religious history.

I was much interested to note the land-birds on Llanddwyn Island, cut off as they were by the sandy warren from the more productive country about and beyond Newborough. They consisted of one pair of Starlings, with a brood of young ones in a crack of the wall of the ruined church; a family of Common Wrens, already out in the dead wood in the garden patch; a pair of Linnets that appeared occasionally; and a marauding Pigeon that used to visit the kitchen garden; these were all, except the Wheatear, which was plentiful up to the last rock of the headland.

Observing the latter, it was easy to understand how one species would replace a similar one, should the latter for any reason fall out. The Wheatear is the

Robin of Llanddwyn. They have no Robins there, but when in the early morning you look out through the wire netting that serves to keep the rats out of your bedroom (for we were "fearfully attended"), you may find the Wheatear perching on the railing surrounding the tiny garden patch, hopping up and down, inside or out, and not greatly disturbed when you lift the latch. Were the Robin here, he would chase out the Wheatear, and it would keep to the warren as its natural haunt; but in the absence of the Robin, the Wheatear haunts the cottages continually, evincing here greater familiarity than is usual with this bird.

At home, at Stretford, on the Mersey, we have the Wheatear only as a bird of passage in the spring and autumn, and although they pass in some hundreds during April and May, and again during August and September, they never sing. Indeed, they rarely 'chack.' The same may be said of the Redstart, which passes in small numbers. Their kinsman, the Whinchat, however, arrives singing; but he stays to nest. Gilbert White has said that while there is breeding there will be song; he might have added, perhaps, that there would be singing only where there was breeding; for the birds that come to us to nest come singing at once, but those that do not nest with us, also do not sing while passing. It will be understood that this remark applies only to the time of nesting.

In that same garden patch where the Wheatears used to come, there grew a Falkland Islands Speedwell (*Veronica decussata*), at that time loaded with clusters of deep-purple flowers. The pilot's

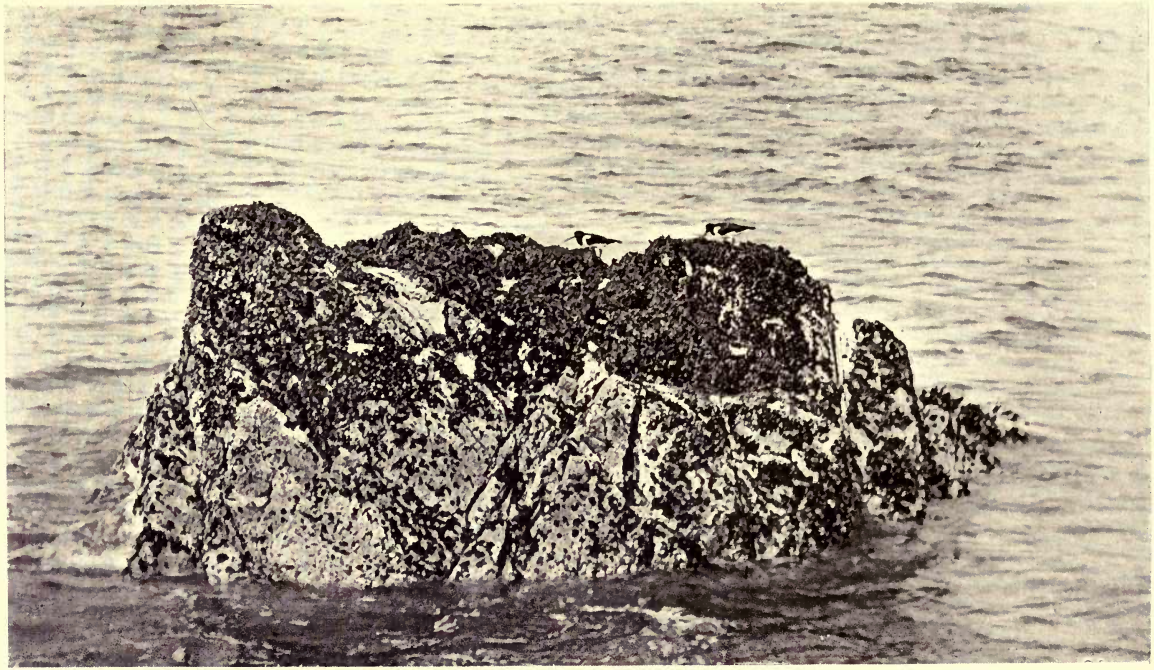
wife gave me the name of it as "Dagrau Adar"—Bird's Tears. The all but identical form of the word *Dagrau*, tears, with the Greek δακρυα of the same meaning, is significant when it is borne in mind that the allied forms (saving Irish, Cornish and Breton—peoples of the same race) in all countries separating Greece from Wales, exhibit no such close relationship either to the Greek and Welsh forms, or among themselves (Latin, *lacrima*; German, *Zaehre*; English, *tear*; with their cognates or derivatives). That all these, with the Sanscrit *açru*, and Persian *zarah*, are derived from some common form, is manifest. Further, it is scarcely likely that the close resemblance between the Greek and Welsh forms can have arisen by independent variation from some earlier common form that resembled these two *less* than they now resemble one another. The inference, therefore, is that *dagr* and δακρυ stand nearer to that primitive common form than any of the allied forms occurring in countries separating Greece from Wales. That primitive common form is most likely to have persisted in its least adulterated state in the region where it was first coined, provided the people inhabiting it had not a different tongue thrust upon them through subjugation, and provided they attained to literary expression sufficiently early to fix and thus render permanent that primitive form. It is in the North only that these conditions are fulfilled (Gothic, *tagr*). It is, therefore, to be concluded that it was from the neighbourhood of Scandinavia that the bearers of the word that became *dagr* and δακρυ went out to impose their language with their yoke upon the earlier occupants of Greece and Wales.

There is another peculiarity that will arrest the attention of the philologist in Wales—the strangely Spanish-like character of some of its words. Seeing the word "Llanddona," a Spaniard might boggle at the "dd," but when told that the doubling of the "d" served to soften the sound of the single letter into the exact equivalent of his own "d," he would pronounce it "Lyanthona" (with the soft "th"), and consider it no bad imitation of his native tongue. The Welshman, however, would tell him that though they—Welsh and Spanish, were, with the Bretons, the only possessors of a consonant "ll," yet whilst the Spaniard pronounces it with the soft "ly" effect, the Welshman renders it with a hard breathing that makes it almost guttural. There would appear to be nothing very strange in that until it was further explained that the word *Llan*, so often in use as a prefix in the formation of Welsh place-names, and meaning primarily a "cleared space or area," was the precise equivalent of the Spanish *Llano*. (Compare also W. *llawn*, *llenwi*, full, to fill, with Sp. *lleno*, *llenar*, of the same meaning). Both words are derived from Lat. *(planus*, *plenus)*, the Latin "pl" having, curiously, been replaced both in Welsh and Spanish by "ll," though this consonant is so differently pronounced in these two languages. The case is still more curious because both tongues have preserved the "pl" in other forms of the same words, viz., Sp. *plano*, *pleno;* W. *plân*.

Several detached rocks lie about Llanddwyn. One, due south, called Ynys Crangc or Crab Island, is the constant perch of Cormorants that come to

fish, but do not breed here. Another snag, nearer in was the resort of Oyster-catchers, which appeared to be feeding upon whatever the flood-tide might throw up on to their stronghold. Although I had satisfied myself that the Oyster-catcher swims readily enough under compulsion, these old birds avoided the water just as carefully as the young one with which I had experimented, running up to the top of the snag whenever the swell flushed its base.

Westward of Llanddwyn, at a short boat's pull, were two much larger rocks; and the farther one, called Adar Island or Bird Island, is exclusively a breeding station of the Common Tern, which had been the chief object of our visiting Llanddwyn. Already in approaching the latter we had heard from time to time the shrill scream of this bird borne in from the water, for the cry of a Tern will carry from a distance at which it is hard to discern the bird itself with the eye. White in all but its pearl-grey upper parts and its black skull-cap, the Tern is yet modelled upon so delicate a system of shallow curves and vanishing lines that, in watching at no great distance its measured, glancing flight, the bird seems to vanish and reappear as if its cap were indeed some Fortunatus' cap. In his light body, long flickering wings, and extended tail-feathers, he is the very opposite of the Guillemot; yet both live upon fish captured beneath the water. Heavy-bodied, short-winged, and with scarcely a tail to speak of, the Guillemot, sitting on the sea, simply ducks down, and using his short, strong wings as fins, propels himself as swiftly beneath the water as he flies above it. He requires no initial impulse, for he carries his generating plant



OYSTER-CATCHERS

with him. But if the long-winged, light-bodied Tern is to take fish in a dense medium like the sea, it must follow other tactics. Therefore, hovering a considerable height above its surface, it hangs suspended a moment upon sighting its victim, then folding its wings, shoots head downward plumb into the water, using the acquired momentum to pursue it through a narrow range should it fail to grip the fish at once in its bill.

The Tern is without exception the noisiest creature by land or sea. They live literally in a state of perpetual excursions and alarums. There were about five hundred of them on the island, and all their doings and sayings were easily to be observed from Llanddwyn. They have a number of cries, but the commonest of them is a shrill scream with plenty of 'r' in it. This cry never ceases from dawn till dark, and local squabbles occur every few minutes, with sudden congestion of white wings and intenser outcry. At longer intervals, and with a roughly regular recurrence, a portion of the birds take wing as by simultaneous inspiration, stream in a white band seaward across the black face of the rocks, wreath themselves about their sea-washed bases, then stream up again and, settling, lift their white wings high for a moment like a sudden show of hands, flicker and fold them. The excursion has ceased; the alarum continues. This is their play, and being so, a sufficient reason for its indulgence, but not explaining why a portion of a host of screaming birds launch themselves suddenly upon the air in concerted movement, having finished which they mingle again indiscriminately with those that did not accompany them.

A wandering gull gets a warm reception from these birds. This is Tern Island, and they let him know it.

Only once during our stay (except when disturbed by our landing upon the island) did the whole body of Terns get up together, and that was when one of the great liners appeared in the offing. Then all the birds rose and hovered, covering the island from end to end, manifestly concerned at even the distant appearance of this modern leviathan.

There is fairly deep water all round Adar Island, and landing can be effected only by jumping at the swell from a small boat on to the lower crags. The whole surface, except small patches in the centre, is jagged at every foot into sharp points and edges. Towards the centre of the island, gravel, such as that in the coves of Llanddwyn, fills many of the fissures, and in places forms small flat areas. Yet Adar Island has no shore of any sort, and stands well off Llanddwyn both at high and low water, besides being about fifty feet high; so that the coarse gravel now deposited in the centre of it, has been churned up from the sea bottom during the tempestuous winter winds and flung over the high rock wall surrounding the island, or carried bodily by the wind from Llanddwyn on the east; both highly improbable suppositions. Failing these, however, the gravel lies where it was deposited when Adar Island had, as Llanddwyn now has, its gravelly coves, and had not yet become merely a great sea-girt snag of rock.

It was chiefly in these gravel-filled fissures that the Terns had laid their eggs, and that in such numbers and confusion that one might well imagine

NESTS OF COMMON TERNS

much of the ceaseless quarrelling to be due to some uncertainty as to their respective owners. Heavy rains had fallen before our visit to the island, and many of the eggs were lying completely submerged in water-filled hollows in the rocks, a calamity that must have happened often enough before, but apparently without teaching the bird's prudence in the selection of their nesting sites. The eggs, generally two, and at times three, were laid either upon the plain gravel, or a slight nest had been constructed of dead stalks to receive them. They showed variation from pale-green to the deepest brown, the markings also varying from heavy blotches to comparatively fine spottings. The date was the 24th June, and there were as yet no young hatched.

At whatever hour one might awaken during the night, the voice of the Tern could be heard; and it is safe to say that, from the time of their arrival in spring until that of their departure in autumn, Adar Island knows not ten minutes silence by night or a moment's peace by day.

Having made the acquaintance of the Tern at home, we cast our eyes beyond Llanddwyn to the great tidal marsh for which the narrow river Cefni draining through it offers an excuse rather than a reason. For the Cefni is but a thread of water that just avails to prevent one passing, from east to west, across the Malldraeth Sands.

Bicycling along the sands . . . . Is bicycling on sand, so obvious an expedient in itself, rare in practice? Some people who watched us cross the great stretch of sands forming Red Wharf Bay—a passage of half-an-hour that would have occupied

half a day along the surrounding hills—informed us upon arrival that they had mistaken us for wild horses. Wild enough in truth we had been, as Curlew and Shelduck, Oyster-catcher, Redshank and Ringed Plover, which failed as a rule to get across our wheels, might have testified. But that is beside the point, this furious chasing not being the object of my query.

Browning tells us that Cardinal Bembo was the putative parent of a word that has since found accredited status in Italian lexicons. *Asolare*, to disport oneself in the open air, as Browning gives it, was the child of Bembo's adoption; for it was said to be derived from Spain, where they still say *á solas*, *á sus solas*, to be absolutely alone, though their *asolar* is to desolate rather than to asolate, if one may so express what is otherwise inexpressible. There lies at the root of the idea absolute solitude, but solitude of the open. There lacked still an element in the Cardinal's creation, for, like other prophets, he foretold what he realised only in part.

I do not know who invented the "free-wheel," but he will be canonized some day, and they will couple his name with that of Bembo, the Italian Cardinal, and say that what His Eminence conceived, he of the free-wheel in due time brought forth. For, he who would go *asolando* must needs find absolute detachment; and it existed not before.

Take a waste of smooth, firm sand, such as that which stretches here before us, mountain-walled sea to left, miles of warren to right, flat marsh ahead to the sky line. Here is no man, nor any trace of him. If a fisherman lands in this solitude at daybreak to

sort his catch and clean his nets, he reships at once for the mainland; and the sea comes up, and washes out all trace of him and his.

And with the risen sun one enters the expanse, without sound, almost without motion ; for the free-wheel, made to aid motion, serves likewise to disguise it—a slow, gliding, floating, dreamful balancing of body at ease and mind set free—detached, *asolando*.

Mysticism on wheels, however, is an unstable compound, soluble in sea-water, liable to be precipitated upon contact with a streak of softer sand, or to explode when brought within range of objects presenting more pronounced affinities.

Well ahead on the tide line we descried a large body of ducks. We could usually make any bird declare itself if inshore, one of us charging straight down upon it, whilst the two others diverged to right and left respectively. But in this instance the birds had the advantage of position, and ere we could come fairly upon them, flew out in a body—some sixty or seventy of them—and plumped down all together well out to sea. As they appeared wholly black I can only suggest that they may have been immature Common Scoters, this duck being well known here in the winter.

Although only the end of June, Oyster-catchers were already in bands of a score or so. Black-headed Gulls also fed in large companies on the flats, but we were not able to locate their breeding haunt. Curlews and Herons stalked around the tidal pools on the sands. But bird-life seemed almost lost in the great expanse of sand and the equally great tract of reedy marsh.

Having ridden some miles, I picked up by the aid of the glass a peculiar white streak running along inshore. I examined it, but could not make out its nature, and was almost disposed to pass on, when I thought I detected a movement as of something white upon the white. Having satisfied myself on this point, I headed straight inshore. After coming within what might be considered the range of a shore bird's susceptibilities, I put my head down and raced over the sand with a speed only possible on such a firm-bedded level track, then sat up, and let the free-wheel play.

The 'cycle again vindicated its claim to share in work of this sort, for as I dashed up, a colony of Lesser Terns rose from their nests crying wildly "*Quit! quit! quit!*" But I had come a long way to quit so soon.

The white streak that had first caught my eye now resolved itself into as exquisite a picture of its kind as I am likely ever to look upon. Hundreds of thousands of shells, largely cockle shells, and for the most part unbroken, had been strewn upon a tract of fine, even sand, its regularity disturbed by the presence of no other object. Sun, wind, and tide had done the work, though now it lay beyond the reach of the tide. The tide had brought the shells up and laid them out, studding the sand rather than loading it confusedly; the wind had rocked them over, so that they lay in most cases with their convex sides uppermost; and the sun had blanched them as they lay. Dazzling white in the sunlight, this still surf of shells skirted a broken line of marram-tufted sandhills, and ran in to flood little creeks and

WHERE THE LESSER TERN BREEDS

coves between them, in which recesses some of the more retiring of the birds had nested. The whole setting was of a prettiness and daintiness past description; for it revealed itself wholly and at once, whereas description can proceed but slowly and in parts.

We discovered about fifteen nests, but it required hours to do so; not because their contents when discovered were not in sharp contrast with the surroundings, but because of the multitude and continuity of the objects presented to the eye. The nests were in all cases just such as Ringed Plovers would have made in similar situations—depressions in the sand, lined with small fragments of broken shells. It was the 26th June, and the nests contained usually two eggs, in three cases three, four contained chicks in down, all able to run swiftly, though hardly larger than the shells from which they had just come out, and one contained two chicks and two eggs. There was no variation in the eggs throughout the colony. Although on Adar Island we had seen great variation in the eggs of the Common Tern, here all were of a pale greenish tint in the ground, with black spots and heavier blotches over clear grey undermarkings, such as those occurring in eggs of the Ringed Plover. There was none of the so-called biscuit-colour type, the only other type I have seen. Probably a small colony of migrants such as this has arisen from a single pair of birds, and by breeding in and in year after year create and confirm a certain uniformity of strain, that manifests itself most readily in the character of the eggs.

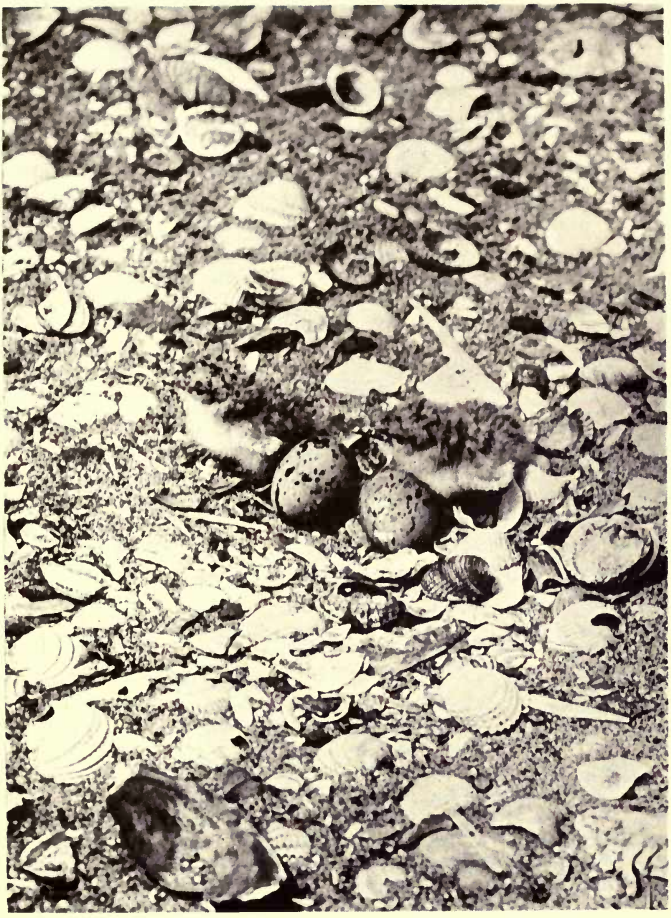
As we moved about the shell shingle, the birds

hovered over us, dashed out across the sands and back again, crying all the while "*Quit!*" or "*Quip!*" in piercing tones, whilst from time to time some small white fury swept past in low flight, rolling out her objurgatory "*Gr-r-r-r-r!*" as we bent over her nest.

The chicks, buffish above, lightly streaked and spotted with black, but white below, recalled those of Gulls and Plovers and Snipe, and of all that great throng that lay eggs of a generally brownish tinge spotted and blotched with black, as if they had been positives from egg-shell negatives, but had managed to keep their under parts white by crouching upon them and hiding them from the light. Out of the shell, at any rate, they are born crouchers, clapping down confidently among the shingle a couple of feet from the observer, and ready to be trodden on rather than admit by moving that they have been detected.

As we returned to the muddy channel of the Cefni far out across the sands (a few miles northward we had seen it a solid mass from bank to bank of Water Crowfoot—a Milky Way of serried white blossoms up and down stream as far as eye could reach) the Lesser Terns crossed us, also returning with excited cries to their nests.

By the way we fell in with a family of Shelducks—male, female, and a numerous following of young in down—feeding by one of the larger pools on the sand. As soon as they sighted us, the female set off excitedly for the channel, the young following in disorder, whilst the male bird seemed to act as rear-guard covering their retreat. The head of the column had already entered the channel and were



LESSER TERNS: EGGS AND YOUNG

swimming across when we got in among the stragglers; but, what with the mud and the water, and the incredible resourcefulness of the scattered young birds in dodging, we secured only two of them for leisurely inspection. They were very unequal in size, but certainly belonged to the same brood, and that a large one. It is not perhaps a matter for surprise that one of us counted up to twenty-four, for the birds were circulating here, there, and everywhere, and if they had not entered the water, it is not impossible that in trying to count and catch them at the same time we might have achieved a grand total of forty-four.

The young Shelduck runs properly, with no duck or goose-like waddle, but with the free gait of plovers and their like. But it is not in running that it excels; it is a born dodger. It will tack and double with an adroitness past calculation, anticipating with surprising resourcefulness one's efforts to capture it. However, we had our two birds, and gathering a good supply of cockles (they were said to be poisonous for man at this time of the year, called by the Welsh *Mis Cwn*, or Dogs' Month) we took the young Shelds up on to the sand, and opened the bivalves for them, the birds sitting down with us and receiving the fish in the most matter-of-fact manner. But we could not trust this show of fellowship, for, to their credit be it said, they esteemed freedom above cockles. Still, they played the game squarely and with no mean tricks. When the mood came upon him, one would get up and stand back, frankly ready for escape. The next move was the human grab and Sheld's evasion, during which the second

bird shot through any favourable gap, and the game was afoot again all over the sands. I wonder if anyone ever died from laughing; if so, chasing young Shelducks must be a dangerous pastime.

By the time we had finished with them (or they with us), the sands for a quarter of a mile around were like a battlefield, and we knew more of the ways of Shelducks than is likely to find its way into the sober pages of ornithology. After all, there come times when one wearies of pedantic prosing about the what, whence, and wherefore of living beings; when one would fain get in among them, and know them for themselves. Nature has become an intellectual vogue; genera and species sprout in the streets. But a bird is not a genus, nor an animal a species. You cannot know the one by examining its grinders, nor the other by determining the form of its breastbone. I know it is not very advanced ornithology to spend one's time careering about a muddy estuary with immature Shelducks; but—what will you?—I believe the creatures liked it! However, let that pass. Having reverted to this sad state of man, we took the birds down to the channel, and no sooner had they touched the water than they dived beneath it, coming up a few yards out to cast back a glance of good-riddance or farewell, ere swimming across to join their relatives on the farther side. There the old male stood on guard, while the female was occupied with the young; for the male never feeds so long as there is even a distant sign of danger, but mounts guard, expressing his feelings from time to time by a curtseying nod. I suppose he would tell the returning young ones

that if they wished to study anthropology, they should do so with some sense of the pre-eminence of the race of the Shelduck in the hierarchy of being, and not barter their birthright for a mess of cockles.

Entering the marsh proper, a wide expanse of reeds and swamp, we put up large numbers of Redshanks, their usually musical 'Työ!' so soft and melancholy when borne from a distance in the open, becoming a loud '*Työp! työp!*' as they beat to and fro about us, calling with the wearying persistence of Lapwings disturbed. From time to time a Snipe went away with a wild '*'scape!*' and wilder flight, seemingly inconsequent considering that the bird often deferred rising until we were all but upon it. But, though the imminence of danger may paralyse, its presence will often arouse unwonted energy and boldness. The hares and rabbits abounding in the drier reed tracts appeared to be governed by some similar principle. Scarcely hidden by the reeds from one standing over them, they crouched without movement at our feet, so that it was not hard to snatch them up by the ears. Once started, however, they flashed away and were gone. Mallards rose in flocks and went away with outstrained necks, wheeling round awkwardly on a wide arc ere they slid down in some remote part of the marsh. Lapwings, already in small bands, rose to play for a few minutes in the distance, then sank and disappeared. Numerous as must be the creatures inhabiting such a spot, their very appearance and disappearance serve only to accentuate its breadth and loneliness. What the marsh gives up it swallows again at once, so that all is still and motionless as if

no life were there at all. Only the black marsh-cattle break the monotony of dull green reeds in which they stand half hidden; and even these have lost all tendency to herd, roaming alone, one here, another far away, and no one drives them afield in the morning or rounds them up at night. Sea and sand and marsh—they play their part here as of old ere man was, or as if, having been, he had ceased to be.

Seated that evening by Dwynwen's cross on the hillock overlooking land and sea, one felt the chill of that other loneliness—the loneliness, not of space, but of time. On the right the sun went down over Malldraeth, throwing up in black relief the ridge that forms its western shore; ranged on the left were the dark, confused forms of the mountains of Carnarvonshire, wrapping themselves in mist, for the day had been hot; behind, on either hand, lay the Warren with its empty shores of yellow sand, from which the long black rock of Llanddwyn is thrust out into the sea that flanks it right and left, and fills the whole forward view.

Solitude was ever the keynote of Llanddwyn; its history is the history of its solitude.

Here this Dwynwen, herself a solitary, unwed, founded a house for solitaries fifteen centuries ago. And here they buried her, her tomb becoming a shrine, where lights were burned continually. For, being herself a maid, she drew, as by some strange law of contraries, all lovers to her, and became their saint. And the monks throve because of her and by means of their sooth-sayings, and out of their riches built an abbey, as the saying goes; but

LLANDDWYN: THE RUINED CHURCH

whether the sands have covered it or the sea swallowed it, no man now knows.

Hard by the ruined church in the hollow stood the residence of its last rector, Richard Kyffyn, afterwards the "Black Dean" of Bangor. He it was who in the reign of Richard III. concerted with other Welsh notabilities to place the Duke of Richmond, afterwards Henry VII., on the throne; and from the solitary coves of Llanddwyn fishing vessels conveyed intelligence into Brittany where the would-be king then was.

Into the same lonely coves many a smuggler has run his cargo, the place becoming notorious for its illicit traffic.

And now, of all their lights and loves and sooth-sayings, their abbey, church, and shrine, their monks and saints, and smugglers of contraband kings and rum kegs, there is left nothing but two commemorative crosses, and part of the walls of the fallen church, its empty eastern window staring like an eyeless socket down the valley. The stones that housed the scheming "Black Dean," have gone to the building of the pilots' cottages. The lights that failed in the hollow have been rekindled on the headland to lighten mariners by night at sea. Of the land that lay around most has become warren, the rest is beneath the waves.

At midnight, about the middle of May, one who looks south may see the constellation of the Northern Crown (*Arianrhod*, the Silver Orb, as the Welsh calls it) come to the meridian. Five miles across the water, and beneath a spot three points east of that where it seems at that time to hang, lies another of

the same name, Caer Arianrhod (*caer*, a walled or fortified place), but sunk in the sea. "Stationem hic in ipso littore," writes a travelling botanist of the earlier half of the seventeeth century, "Romani milites habuerunt, cujus adhuc satis clara vestigia manent." But, so strange are the courses of man's findings-out and forgettings, that it is safe to say he knows to-day as much of the Arianrhod in the sky as of that submerged in the sea.

The light lingers long in these midsummer days, in fact never wholly fades, the glow creeping round by the north, and so back again eastwards, ere a midnight watcher is well aware that day has ended and again begun, "so near are the out-goings of the night and of the day." And the time assorts well with the place. For the world is old in these parts, a twilight world, physically and historically. Hereabouts are ancient shores of some lost Western Land; for the fabled Atlantis is not all myth. Here, too, is the race of the little black-eyed, black-haired man, who once held the land by aboriginal right; for no earlier occupants are known than the small-bodied, smooth-faced creatures whose bones modern science has drawn from their ancient burial-places to measure and name. Pushed everywhere into corners, or clinging on among the hills. they have been thrust westward by successive hordes of stronger invaders, until they remain only in these extreme western shores of Europe,—the Celtic Fringe as some have called them, because their own tongue has gone down in silence and they speak a language thrust on them by Celtic-speaking conquerors. After the first feeble resistance, they would resign

themselves, and a younger generation would arise proud to imitate the speech of the dominant race, and ready to forget the tongue of their own people. And now, by the "peaceful penetration" of Wales by the English, the language of the Cymry, too, is passing. In large portions of the country the younger generation are quite unable to speak Welsh, and many of those who can, will, in passing an Englishman, ostentatiously display their knowledge of his tongue, being in a measure ashamed of their own. If I allow myself such criticism, it is because I would have a Welshman Welsh to the bone. We have pettinesses enough of which to divest ourselves, but of all pettinesses the most miserable is that which prompts a man to foul his own nest.

When I come upon one of that small, aboriginal, dark race, he exerts upon me a fascination which I am conscious is almost ludicrous in its effects. The mystery of eld hangs over him. I watch this relic of a remote and unrecorded past as I might watch some late survivor of an ancient and all but extinct species. But when he speaks in his thin, piping, sing-song voice a mongrel jargon that is neither good Cymric nor plain Saxon, I pity him. I feel that he has overstayed his time and missed his way. He should have crept in long ago, ere Celt or Saxon came, to sleep with his own people, whose portion these many thousand years has been silence and oblivion.

If one should tarry long at Llanddwyn, the passive spirit of the spot would drug the mind, lulling all human hopes and fears into settled acquiescence. With so much gone one would grow content to hear

the soft lapping of the water in the coves, stealing the land by grains. If, sooner or later, all must go, why struggle, why resist? Let it go, one would say, so it go gently, part of the everlasting interchange of land and sea. But when in the winter nights, the west winds whip the gravel from the beech, and send the black seas thundering up the cove, so that the ground trembles beneath the pounding surf, the will rises in revolt. Then one would fain have at it, and curb it, and dam it off with dikes of stone and iron, and let it gnash its teeth on them and break them.

We came out of Llanddwyn in other guise than we went in. The bicycles having been hitched on to the household donkey, he drew, whilst we steered, over the sandy Warren; so that, led by an ass, as may be said, we returned to the ways of men.

A YOUNG CUCKOO

(With some Remarks on the Theory of Assimilation)

At Beaumaris, on the 22nd June, we came upon a pair of anxious Meadow-pipits at a spot where Rock-pipits might almost have been looked for.

Where some elevated grass land abutted upon a narrow, heavily shingled beech, successive land-slips had formed a cliff-like declivity, upon the irregular surface of which coarse grass and weeds such as Meadow-pipits commonly build in, had found lodgement. Beyond the narrow strip of shingle thirty feet below was the open sea.

We had that day been far afield with small success, and were at the time returning home in the rain, so that it was with no great interest that we stood to watch the two Meadow-pipits, each bearing food in its bill—unusually large food for Meadow-pipits—and waited for them to descend to the nest evidently placed somewhere on the slope below.

Some kind power must have given us patience beyond our mood, for when the male bird, after long hesitating, at last visited the slope, I proposed that we should just inspect the spot and continue our journey. A minute later my companion called "Here it is!" and looking where he pointed "Great heavens!" I exclaimed; "it's a Cuckoo!" Saul and his father's asses had found a modern application.

The nest, placed in a hollow on the slope beneath a natural arch of dried grass, was screened by hanging shreds of the latter, and through this curtain the young Cuckoo from time to time struck suddenly, withdrawing slowly, the unclosed bill still showing red within as he withdrew. Among the grass just before the nest lay three eggs of the Meadow-pipit, more or less hard-set, but broken.

Setting the hanging grass aside so as to disclose the bird, I secured a picture of it and its surroundings, untouched save in the particulars mentioned.

I was familiar enough with the literature of the Cuckoo to know that I might expect scant courtesy from its young; but I confess that my reception by this bird surpassed anything I had anticipated. I was used to the grown-up Cuckoo, with its blue-grey back, mock hawk-stripings, but low, smooth curves and gentle aspect, breasting the air as a Missel-thrush breasts it; but I had not looked for this bullet-headed, blear-eyed, red-mouthed, "pen"-feathered, puff-chinned creature, already furnished with all his hawk-like barrings on breast and underwing and tail, besides having every one of his ash-brown body-feathers conspicuously edged with white. The combination of red, white, and dark for a moment recalled the Barred Woodpecker, but the bird's gestures at once banished the thought.

These gestures are such as to have caused it to be called fiendish, and if the word be used to denote a disposition so gratuitously vicious and aggressive as to suggest the promptings of some secret, malignant principle, it is apt enough. Upon any movement near the nest the feathers of the body,

YOUNG CUCKOO IN MEADOW-PIPIT'S NEST

always puffed up as if in sullenness, would swell out further, the bird would rise up slowly with arched neck like a snake about to strike, the red-lined mouth exposed between the gaping bill. After lingering thus for a few moments, it would strike with sudden vehemence, uttering a click of stifled rage as it did so. The stroke was delivered with such violence that often the bird would pitch forward on its bill, having apparently no firm grip on the flat with its zygodactyl feet.

It required some time for me to accustom myself to thc idea that these shows of violence were unattended by any harm, but in truth there was little more force in the descending bill of the Cuckoo than in the business-like nip of a Blue-tit. Its aspect and gestures, however, must be terrifying to some small creatures.

When I became sufficiently bold, I would thrust my finger upon the bird, and the scene that followed was surprising. Each assault was met by a fiercer defence; the bird was never beaten; and though the finger was pressed home until the Cuckoo toppled backward over the nest, it rose at once, and with every feather erect and wings half-spread, rushed upon the retreating hand with snapping bill and shrill screams of fury. Thus it would remain upon a little grassy platform before the nest, rising slowly with a surging motion from time to time as if under the influence of recurring paroxysms of rage, the feathers puffed, the breast heaving, and the bill opening to snap; then, the paroxysm past, the bird would sink down slowly, spent and panting, truly suffering from its own excess. As the nest was near

a public way, and I feared that the bird's excursions might lead to its detection, I was at pains upon leaving always to place it in the nest in the hollow, cover it up with the herbage, darken the hole with my cap for a while, then quickly slip down the slope ere my presence could provoke it to fresh extravagance; but as often as not I had barely sunk from view when the bird would rush forward on to the platform before the nest, and swaying on unsteady legs, snap after me upon the air with futile wrath.

When I found the Cuckoo the sheaths of some of the feathers were still unshed, the slaty black skin of the belly, nape and centre of the back was still bare, and the eyes had a peculiar bluish haze over them like that which appears upon the eyes of an animal just dead. Indeed, the sight appeared still to be imperfect; for, if I touched one side of the nest and passed my hand rapidly to the other side, the bird responded by attacking the first rather than the second position. It was not possible to discover if it specially resented irritation of the naked portion of the back, because it resented alike the touching of any part.

Upon visiting the nest the following day I found that the three ejected eggs had been removed, presumably by the old birds. Seeing that the young Cuckoo was about ten days old at the time (it could fly a week later), the eggs had probably lain before the nest for a week previously. Why should the birds hasten to remove them upon my discovery of the nest? Many birds are punctilious in the removal of egg shell from the neighbourhood of the

YOUNG CUCKOO
(about 10 days old).

nest. If the act were instinctive, it should in this case have been performed earlier.

In the matter of instinct, however, one has to watch but little to discover evidence of intelligence in actions that might well be supposed to be governed by instinct alone. Thus, these Meadow-pipits brought to the Cuckoo great long-legged flies that would have choked their own offspring. They must, therefore, have recognised the inadequacy of the food they would have collected instinctively for their own young, to meet the needs of their present sturdier charge.

Desiring, among other things, to hear the natural note of the young Cuckoo, I decided to spend a full day at the nest. Hitherto the bird had been silent, emitting no sound save under provocation—a kind of suffocated click in the throat when battling with my finger, and the shrill, repeated scream of baffled, but undaunted rage when thoroughly overborne.

I had read in Blackwall's "Researches in Zoology"—"the chirp of the young Cuckoos is the same, as Dr. Jenner rightly observes, whatever the species of their foster-parents may be; hence it follows that it is not learned from any other bird, but is exclusively their own."

I had not long to wait. Both birds fed the Cuckoo continuously throughout the earlier part of the morning; perched, one or both, near by during the middle of the day; and resumed feeding during the afternoon. My presence at the nest in the morning broke through their domestic routine, and one or the other of the birds would come, and hovering a little way above me with dangling legs, emit the usual

"*Wheet! wheet!*" of the Meadow-pipit. After a period of sullen taciturnity the Cuckoo suddenly started up, and answering the Meadow-pipit, gave it back "*wheet!*" for "*wheet!*" with the precise pitch and volume of the original note. I may be allowed to add that I have been accustomed from youth up to the precise determination of musical values, so that had I heard this note no more than once, its exact equivalence would have placed beyond doubt in my mind the fact that a young Cuckoo can with indistinguishable precision render the note of its foster-parent. Having heard the answering note given many times during the day, I have the assurance not only that it can, but that it actually does so.

It would be unseemly too readily to cast doubt upon Jenner's statement that the chirp of the young Cuckoo is the same whatever species of bird be its foster-parent. It may indeed well be that such a note later supersedes the note learned in its earliest life by the young Cuckoo from its foster-parent. I shall hope some day to hear it. In the meanwhile I may place indubitably upon record that a young Cuckoo repeats with perfect precision the call of its foster-parent. It would be of much interest to have it determined by observers who are also competent judges of sound-values, if the note by which the young Cuckoo responds to foster-parents of other species than the Meadow-pipit, is also a rendering of the foster-parents' own.

The determination of this point would be of interst less for its own sake than for its bearing upon a larger question. There is a widely accredited theory that Cuckoos are divisible into distinct clans,

the members of each laying a type of egg distinct in its style and coloration from the eggs laid by members of any other clan. Each of these types is held to approximate in its style and coloration to the eggs laid by some particular species of the birds that act as foster-parents to the young parasite, so that there is said to be a *gens* of Cuckoos that lay eggs resembling those of the Meadow-pipit and place them regularly in Meadow-pipits' nests; and so on for other species. Heredity is called in to account for the continuance from generation to generation of each clan of Cuckoos with its respective foster-species; and Natural Selection to explain the assimilation of the type of egg laid by each clan to that of its particular foster-species, through the elimination of those members whose eggs failed to show a sufficient degree of resemblance. Thus, Professor Newton writes: "That there is a reasonable possibility of each Cuckoo most commonly putting her eggs in the nest of the same species of bird, and of this habit being transmitted to her posterity, does not seem to be a very violent supposition. Without attributing any wonderful sagacity to her, it does not seem unlikely that the Cuckoo which had once successfully foisted her egg on a Reed-wren or a Titlark should again seek for another Reed-wren's or Titlark's nest (as the case may be) when she had another egg to dispose of, and that she should continue her practice from one season to another. . . . . Such a habit could hardly fail to become hereditary, so that the daughter of a Cuckoo which always put her egg into a Reed-wren's, Titlark's, or Wagtail's nest would do as did her mother."

If different clans of Cuckoos really exist, is there any need to invoke so remote an agency as Heredity to account for them, when a more intelligible reason lies at hand in the individual experience of each Cuckoo? Would not a Cuckoo that was hatched and for months tended by Meadow-pipits prefer, if any preference be exercised at all, the nests of Meadow-pipits for the deposition of its eggs to the nests of other species with which it had had no relationship at all? Such an action would be but the natural continuation of its existence along the line upon which it started life.

It is in the interest of this direct appeal to each Cuckoo's own experience that it is desirable to determine if the young Cuckoo uses the note of its foster-parents. Even if it did not use it, the hearing of this note, once familiar, in later life would, through association of ideas, very probably be an invitation to the now grown bird; if it were established that during its foster-days the young bird itself did use the note, it must in later life be even more readily attracted by it.

If the appeal to Heredity seemed unnecessary, the demand made upon Natural Selection involves assumptions that put a strain upon facts.

In order to decide if there has been assimilation of the Cuckoo's eggs to those of the foster-species, we should need to know what was the type (or types) of egg laid by the Cuckoo when first it foisted its eggs upon other birds. If it were anything like the average of existing types, it had not far to travel in some directions; if there were a greater difference, what would become of the appeal to Natural

Selection, based as it is upon the assumption that birds discriminate in favour of those eggs most nearly approximating to their own? If ever such approximation was wanted but lacking, and if ever such discrimination was practised, it was surely when the foisting of the Cuckoo's egg upon other birds was first attempted.

But need we go further than this problem of the Cuckoo's egg to find that birds do not discriminate in such a manner. The vast difference existing between the eggs of the Cuckoo and those of one of its most frequent dupes—the Hedge-sparrow—is scarcely disposed of by Professor Newton's "explanatory hypothesis," when he writes:—"We know that certain kinds of birds resent interference with their nests much less than others, and among them it may be asserted that the Hedge-sparrow will patiently submit to various experiments. She will brood with complacency the egg of a Redbreast *(Erithacus Rubecula)*, so unlike her own, and for aught we know to the contrary, may even be colour-blind. In the case of such a species there would be no need of anything further to insure success—the terror of the nest-owner at seeing her home invaded by a Hawk-like giant, and some of her treasures tossed out, would be enough to stir her motherly feelings so deeply that she would without misgiving, if not with joy that something had been spared to her, resume the duty of incubation as soon as the danger was past. But with other species it may, nay doubtless it is, different. Here, assimilation of the introduced egg to those of the rightful owner may be necessary, for there can hardly be a doubt

as to the truth of Dr. Baldamus's theory (the only theory, by the way, he has put forth), as to the object of the assimilation being to render the Cuckoo's egg 'less easily recognised by the foster-parents as a substituted one.'

Submissive to experiment as the Hedge-sparrow may be, she is not alone in this respect. If the Hedge-sparrow will brood the Redbreast's egg, the Redbreast likewise will brood that of the Hedge-sparrow. In fact, tricks of this kind may be played upon almost any bird within similar bounds.

How comes it, then, that the Cuckoos' eggs laid in the nests of Hedge-sparrows have failed, save in instances so rare as to be accounted phenomenal, to become assimilated to those of that species, whilst the Cuckoos' eggs laid in the nests of Redbreasts show similarity to those of the Redbreast?

Before the question can be answered, some confusion as to the nature of assimilation must be cleared away. This is caused by the words in which Professor Newton endorses Dr. Baldamus's theory:—"there can hardly be a doubt as to the truth of Dr. Baldamus's theory (the only theory, by the way, he has put forth), as to the object of the assimilation being to render the Cuckoo's egg 'less easily recognised by the foster-parents as a substituted one.'"

But in what sense can assimilation be said to have an object, unless as a matter of metaphysics? I understand Natural Selection as applied to the process of assimilation to consist in the following: Certain Cuckoos laid eggs in the nests of other birds. In cases when such Cuckoos' eggs were

sufficiently similar to those of the species of bird into whose nest they had been introduced, they are assumed to have been hatched without suspicion, the strain of Cuckoos laying that similar kind of egg being thereby and to that extent "naturally selected" by the agency of that foster-species. On the other hand, the foster-species is assumed to have refused to hatch Cuckoos' eggs not sufficiently similar to its own, and the strain of Cuckoos laying that dissimilar type of egg was, *qua* that foster-species, eliminated. By elimination of Cuckoos laying eggs different from those of the foster-parent, only those Cuckoos whose eggs corresponded more nearly with its own, survived to continue to place their eggs in its nest. Such eggs are said to have been assimilated by a process of Natural Selection. In this process the discriminating foster-species have been the "natural selectors," and the degree of assimilation will depend upon the extent to which discrimination has been exercised by them.

It will thus be seen that assimilation has no object, and can have none, least of all "to render the Cuckoo's egg 'less easily recognised by the foster-parents as a substituted one.'" For assimilation, by the theory, is a by-product of the discrimination exercised by foster-species against eggs unlike their own, and to assign to it such an object is to ascribe to foster-parents as the determining agents in the process of assimilation, the object of selecting a type of Cuckoo's egg most nearly resembling their own, in order the more readily to deceive themselves; which is untenable.

Having cleared away this ambiguity, we return to the question why the Cuckoo's egg laid in the nest of the Redbreast approximates at times to that laid by the Redbreast itself, whilst the Cuckoo's egg laid in the Hedge-sparrow's nest does not, setting aside alleged but very rare instances of agreement.

Regarding the general question of the alleged exercise of discrimination by foster-parents, I would ask—Who ever found a Cuckoo's egg ejected from the foster-nest so as even to afford a presumption that it had been discriminated against? Who ever found a foster-nest containing a Cuckoo's egg deserted? Yet, assimilation cannot be said to have been so perfected as to make discrimination a thing of the past.

There being no such evidence of the exercise of discrimination in general, there is no need to inquire why it should have been exercised by the Redbreast and not by the Hedge-sparrow.

If it be true that assimilation has taken place—and to prove that we should require, as already stated, to know what type (or types) of egg was laid by the Cuckoo when first it was foisted upon its neighbours—it would naturally most easily be accomplished in the case of foster-species laying eggs most resembling the type of egg originally laid by the Cuckoo. If this was anything like the average of existing tpyes, one can well understand that, given the degree of variability known to exist among the eggs of Cuckoos of various species, frequent cases of apparent assimilation would arise among eggs of a similarly dull, mottled, indeterminate type. It is among such eggs that resemblance is most found. On the other

hand, it was improbable that variability in the egg of the Cuckoo, whatever were the type of egg originally laid by it, would be sufficient to meet the needs of extreme cases in which the eggs of foster-parents were of a markedly different type. Thus it arises that agreement is more rarely found in such cases.

It is true that eggs, stated to be Cuckoos' eggs, are reported to have been found resembling the more pronounced types of eggs laid by some foster-parents, but such cases are relatively very rare. Nevertheless, being rare, and concerned with foster-parents laying more pronounced and diverse types of eggs, they are crucial. Even in such cases, Professor Newton tells us: "The operation of this kind of Natural Selection would be most needed in those cases where the species are not easily duped, that is, in those cases which occur the least frequently. Here it is we find it, for observation shows that the eggs of the Cuckoo deposited in nests of the Red-backed Shrike, of the Bunting, of the Redstart, and of the Icterine Warbler, approximate in their colouring to eggs of those species—species in whose nests the Cuckoo rarely (in comparison with others) deposits eggs."

It is therefore by a more rigorous application of Natural Selection, that is, by refusing to hatch any Cuckoo's egg that did not attain a marked degree of resemblance to their own, that these four species got rid of would-be patrons among the Cuckoos save such as laid eggs so like their own that they escaped detection, and were hatched, these four fortunate strains of Cuckoos being thereby preserved.

But this will scarcely bear examination. Is it credible that the type of egg originally laid by the Cuckoo should have been such as to pass muster with four more than ordinarily exacting critics, each requiring it to be something different from that required by the three others? It is credible only upon the assumption that the Cuckoo was able at once out of the superfluity of variation in its eggs to offer each the distinct type demanded. If approximation to this extent exists to-day, variation to a similar extent may well have existed then. The task is to prove it. This will not be made less difficult by the fact that these exigent critics will brood Cuckoos' eggs of types quite different from their own.

It is to be feared, however, that the diversity believed to exist among Cuckoos' eggs is not lessened by the admission as such of every larger egg found in a nest with smaller ones. The divergence in colouring often shown by oversized specimens may be just enough to favour the fiction, and this established, surprise may well be excited by the wonderful similarity of the markings. One collection of eggs authenticated by indisputable evidence from each of the countries where the young of the European Cuckoo is reared, would be worth cartloads of shells gathered by ardent and emulative collectors anxious to increase the number of their specimens rather than to extract the truth of the matter from their observations. It may never be possible fully to explain the many and strangely interdependent anomalies in the life-history of the Cuckoo; but it should be no great task to form a complete and irreproachably authentic collection of

its eggs, so that this portion of the subject at any rate need no longer remain an ornithological toy.

In leaving this portion of the subject, I should add that I have examined seventy-six nests, representing thirty-one species of birds, containing Cuckoos' eggs. The alleged specialisation into types approximating to the types of eggs laid by the foster-parents shows no constancy, the difference between the Cuckoo's egg laid in one nest and that laid in another nest of birds of the same species being as great as between the Cuckoos' eggs laid in the nests of two birds of different species. Indeed, I have seen few Cuckoo's eggs, however different the species of birds in whose nests they were laid, that differed more widely than the egg to be seen in the nest of a Pied Wagtail in the Museum of Owens College, at Manchester, and the Cuckoo's egg I took with one of those of the foster-parent from a nest of the same species at Mobberley, Cheshire.

The variation exhibited in the collections I have seen was considerable, but I could in most cases have improved the assimilation by transferring the eggs from one nest to another. Unless more convincing evidence were brought forward than such as was furnished by the seventy-six nests mentioned above, I should conclude that cases of resemblance between Cuckoos' eggs and those of the species in whose nests they are deposited, are due to coincidence rendered possible by a large degree of variation in the former. Instances in which there is no such resemblance preponderate. Different minds, I know, will draw the line between resemblance and lack of resemblance in different places; but, wherever it be drawn, upon

the theory of assimilation by Natural Selection it will set a division between the discriminating powers of one group of foster-parents and those of another group which any field-naturalist, knowing the birds themselves, will declare to be unproven.

In order that it may be seen upon what ground I to a large extent base my conclusions, I append Tables of Analyses of the seventy-six examples mentioned above.

I visited the Cuckoo frequently, always to find the Meadow-pipits in attendance with food, the male bird varying his services by mounting to express his feelings upon the situation in strangely inappropriate song.

Upon going to the spot one morning, I found that the bird had left the flattened nest, and taken refuge from the heat of the sun in a cavity in the earth beside it. I drew it forth, and setting its feet aright, found that it perched docilely upon my finger. Surprised at this manifestation of confidence, I essayed further intimacy, to find that the demon in the bird slumbered only, but had not departed out of it. Upon the slightest movement on my part, it gripped the finger upon which it was perched, raised itself in the old laboursome manner, and with feathers puffed out and parted bill, prepared to meet attack. The movement subsiding, the bird also subsided, sitting quietly upon my hand. Holding it thus, and seeing the placid manner in which it observed small things that offered no offence, I could not but feel that this strange rage that lay smouldering in it, ready to blaze out upon so slight provocation, was as something separate from it—an infirmity laid upon a creature otherwise gentle and

without harm. Whence should it have this ferocity of temperament so strange in a young bird, and found in such, I believe, only among some birds of prey? Has it assumed with the stripes of the hawk the spirit of the hawk also? What should be the inward impulse prompting it? what the outward conditions that called it forth? In the young of predaceous birds it is the expression of a character they bear with them through life; but in after-life this hawk-like creature would set itself to seek out its small fare of caterpillars, hunted, rather than hunting, for the the remainder of its days. What will then become of its fighting spirit? What end can it serve even now?

This is that same spirit that set it, when but a few days old, to heave out of the foster-nest its foster-parent's eggs. We know with what unnatural violence and momentary intensification of strength this is done; we know the exhaustion that ensues. Here are both now in the bird that has no longer any eggs to eject, nor any foster-brethren to get rid of—the same violence and concentration of force, the same collapse when the mood has passed.

It is stated by Mr. Hudson in his excellent account of the young Cuckoo, that the back is peculiarly irritable until the fifth day after hatching, and that pressure of egg or young upon this part arouses the fury and calls forth the strength with which either is ejected from the nest. Upon the fifth day the irritability is said to be lost, and the young Cuckoo to suffer pressure without resentment. There thus arises an impression that physical pressure upon the young Cuckoo's back is the cause of its almost cataleptic violence and strength, so that one might imagine

that but for that, these would remain unmanifested. Seeing, however, that these exhibitions of violence and strength continue until the bird leaves the nest about the seventeenth day after hatching (I have no experience of them afterwards), should not we regard that pressure as the provocation rather than as the cause of manifestations that persist when the provocation no longer operates? Then the bird was blind, and responded to touch; now it sees, and to the visible menace of a finger will bring the same furious resentment, the same sudden concentration of energy, to be succeeded by the same exhaustion, pictures taken of it at such times presenting it as a creature suffering and ill at ease, with bill open no longer for attack, but for air to relieve its panting body.

Thus, when placed on the grass whilst the camera was being erected a few yards distant from it, and when no graver provocation was offered than the slight movements attending the operation, the Cuckoo would rise periodically, slowly and as it seemed with difficulty, the bill open and the feathers puffed out; and being up, it heaved as if with anger and disgust, snapping toward me at times, then sank down again with the same deliberation, slowly closing its bill. This, regularly and repeatedly done, appeared ludicrous when one compared the irate fledgeling with a man's bulk and five feet of camera and tripod; but it appealed to one also as something uncanny, so that the fascination of it would cause me to desist from my work, and stand to watch this small creature expressing by its strange gestures a spirit of unappeasable antagonism checked by no sense of fear.

I spent my last evening in Beaumaris in the

company of the Cuckoo, I seated upon the slope beside the nest, he perching as usual upon my hand or knee, or sitting beside me in the grass.

At the foot of the slope, half a dozen yards below, was a low sea wall; beyond it the band of coarse shingle, narrower now because the sea was playing upon it. A strange place for a Cuckoo to be born in; a strange first scene in life for this woodland bird to have looked out upon; a perilous place indeed; for on the one hand was open sea, and on the other, beyond the foot-way, open fields with very distant trees, towards which his ground-feeding foster-parents would probably not be drawn to lead him. And he himself had as yet seen more of ships than of trees.

Thinking of these things, and others—for my last night by the sea ere returning inland has in it always something of my first night at sea when outward bound—I yet felt glad to have known this small strange creature as a being, albeit so wrapped in mystery as a bird. And knowing it for a solitary and a wanderer beyond any of its kind, smuggled into life in an alien nest, tended in blind devotion by creatures it requites as blindly by destroying their own offspring; fashioned like a hawk to be hunted by every chit that flies; never to mate, never to nest, never to rear or lead its young; remembering this, I could have wished that this Unnatural Selection had not been, or that this strange mockery of life might be undone.

They are not conscious of loss, it will be said, who do not remember possession. To which very rational protest, it may be implied—one may like a Cuckoo and care little for conundrums.

ANALYSIS of a collection of 68 nests, comprising 30 species of British birds, each nest containing one egg, or more, of the Cuckoo *(Cuculus canorus)* and the corresponding clutch of eggs of the foster-parents.

SYSTEM OF NOTATION.

Full resemblance	in the Colour of the Ground	5
,, ,,	in the Colour of the Markings	5
,, ,,	in the Form of the Markings	5
,, ,,	in the Distribution of the Markings ...	5
	Possible Maximum	20

		Number of Eggs in Nest.	Colour.				Markings.				Result.
			Ground.		Markings.		Form.		Distribution.		
			+	−	+	−	+	−	+	−	
1	Ring Ousel (*Turdus torquatus*)	... 4 and 1 ...	2	3	2	3 ...	4	1	5	0 ...	= +13, − 7
2	Wheatear (*Saxicola œnanthe*)	... 1 and 1 ...	0	5	0	5 ...	0	5	0	5 ...	= + 0, − 20
3	Stonechat (*Pratincola rubicola*)	... 3 and 1 ...	0	5	0	5 ...	0	5	0	5 ...	= + 0, − 20
4	Whinchat (*Pratincola rubetra*) (1)	... 4 and 1 ...	0	5	0	5 ...	0	5	0	5 ...	= + 0, − 20
5	,, ,, (2)	... 6 and 1 ...	0	5	0	5 ...	0	5	0	5 ...	= + 0, − 20
6	,, ,, (3)	... 5 and 1 ...	0	5	0	5 ...	0	5	0	5 ...	= + 0, − 20
7	,, ,, (4)	... 6 and 1 ...	0	5	0	5 ...	0	5	0	5 ...	= + 0, − 20
8	Redstart (*Ruticilla phœnicurus*)	... 4 and 1 ...	0	5	0	5 ...	0	5	0	5 ...	= + 0, − 20
9	Redbreast (*Erithacus rubecula*) (1)	... 5 and 1 ...	1	4	1	4 ...	2	3	4	1 ...	= + 8, − 12

| | | |

			Number of Eggs in Nest.	Colour. Ground. +	Colour. Ground. −	Colour. Markings. +	Colour. Markings. −	Markings. Form. +	Markings. Form. −	Markings. Distribution. +	Markings. Distribution. −	Result.
34	Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla rayii*)	(2)	2 and 1	1	4	0	5	1	4	1	4	= + 3, − 17
35	„	(3)	2 and 1	3	2	4	1	3	2	1	4	= + 11, − 9
36	„	(4)	4 and 1	1	4	0	5	0	5	1	4	= + 2, − 18
37	„	(5)	3 and 1	3	2	1	4	1	4	4	1	= + 9, − 11
38	Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*)	(1)	3 and 1	1	4	1	4	1	4	2	3	= + 5, − 15
39	„	(2)	2 and 1	0	5	1	4	0	5	1	4	= + 2, − 18
40	„	(3)	5 and 1	2	3	4	1	3	2	4	1	= + 13, − 7
41	„	(4)	4 and 1	2	3	2	3	0	5	1	4	= + 5, − 15
42	„	(5)	3 and 1	1	4	2	3	1	4	2	3	= + 6, − 14
43*	„	(6)	5 and 2	5	0	5	0	4	1	4	1	= + 18, − 2
				2	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	= + 9, − 11
44	„	(7)	4 and 1	5	0	5	0	4	1	4	1	= + 18, − 2
45	„	(8)	2 and 1	1	4	2	3	2	3	2	3	= + 7, − 13
46	„	(9)	4 and 1	0	5	1	4	1	4	2	3	= + 4, − 16
47	Tree Pipit (*Anthus trivialis*)	(1)	3 and 1	0	5	4	1	2	3	2	3	= + 8, − 12
48	„	(2)	6 and 1	0	5	0	5	2	3	1	4	= + 3, − 17
49	„	(3)	6 and 1	5	0	1	4	1	4	1	4	= + 8, − 12
50	„	(4)	3 and 1	4	1	2	3	2	3	1	4	= + 9, − 11
51	Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa grisola*)	(1)	4 and 1	2	3	2	3	1	4	2	3	= + 7, − 13
52	„	(2)	4 and 1	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	2	= + 11, − 9

* No. 43. The first egg is of the same shape and ruddy-brown colour as the eggs of the foster-parent, but is slightly larger and with markings rather more detached. The second egg is of a greenish-grey, larger and rounder than the brown one.

53	Greenfinch (*Ligurinus chloris*)	(1)	...	4	and	1	...	2	3	3	2	...	1	4	1	4	...	= + 7, − 13
54	„	„	(2)	...	4	and	1	...	5	0	4	1	...	3	2	3	2	...	= + 15, − 5
55†	Hawfinch (*Coccothraustes vulgaris*)		...	2	and	1	...	5	0	4	1	...	2	3	1	4	...	= + 12, − 8	
56	Chaffinch (*Fringilla cœlebs*)	(1)	...	4	and	1	...	2	3	0	5	...	0	5	0	5	...	= + 2, − 18	
57	„	„	(2)	...	5	and	1	...	4	1	1	4	...	0	5	0	5	...	= + 5, − 15
58	Lesser Redpoll (*Linota rufescens*)	(1)	4	and	1	...	0	5	4	1	...	3	2	0	5	...	= + 7, − 13		
59	„	„	(2)	3	and	1	...	0	5	3	2	...	2	3	1	4	...	= + 6, − 14	
60	Twite (*Linota flavirostris*)	(1)	...	3	and	1	...	0	5	0	5	...	0	5	0	5	...	Albinos	
61	„	„	(2)	...	4	and	1	...	2	3	3	2	...	4	1	0	5	...	= + 9, − 11
62	„	„	(3)	...	3	and	1	...	1	4	1	4	...	1	4	1	4	...	= + 4, − 16
63	Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula Europœa*)	(1)	...	5	and	1	...	2	3	2	3	...	1	4	0	5	...	= + 5, − 15	
64	„	„	(2)	...	4	and	1	...	1	4	2	3	..	3	2	1	4	...	= + 7, − 13
65	Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*)		3	and	1	...	1	4	4	1	...	1	4	0	5	...	= + 6, − 14		
66	Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schœniclus*)	(1)	...	5	and	1	...	4	1	2	3	...	1	4	1	4	...	= + 8, − 12	
67	„	„	(2)	...	4	and	1	...	5	0	1	4	...	1	4	1	4	...	= + 8, − 12
68	„	„	(3)	...	5	and	1	...	5	0	1	4	...	1	4	1	4	...	= + 8, − 12

† No. 55. This egg, agreeing so strikingly in its coloration with those of the Hawfinch, also agrees as remarkably in point of size. The measurements are :—

Hawfinch,	No. 1.	... ...	·87 × ·66 inch,
„	No. 2.	... ...	·97 × ·66 „
Cuckoo ...	...	... ...	·94 × ·66 „

Although differing in the form and distribution of the markings from the eggs of the Hawfinch, it is in my opinion not a Cuckoo's egg, but a variant from the usual Hawfinch type, such as is not seldom found in clutches of eggs of that bird.

I am indebted to Mr. Midgley, the Curator of the Chadwick Natural History Museum, Bolton, for permission to inspect the above collection at that institution.

ANALYSIS of a collection of seven nests, comprising six species of British Birds, each nest containing one egg of the Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) and the corresponding clutch of eggs of the foster-parents. (On view at the Museum of Owens College, Manchester).

STANDARD OF NOTATION as in the preceding analysis.

	Number of Eggs in Nest.	Colour. Ground, +	Ground, −	Markings. +	Markings. −	Markings. Form. +	Form. −	Distribution. +	Distribution. −	Result.
69 Hedge Sparrow (*Accentor modularis*) (1)	2 and 1	0	5	0	5	0	5	0	5	= + 0, − 20
70 „ „ (2)	3 and 1	0	5	0	5	0	5	0	5	= + 0, − 20
71 Tree Pipit (*Anthus trivialis*)	5 and 1	2	3	2	3	1	4	3	2	= + 8, − 12
72 Redbreast (*Erithacus rubecula*)	5 and 1	4	1	2	3	5	0	5	0	= + 16, − 4
73 Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)	6 and 1	1	4	2	3	2	3	1	4	= + 6, − 14
74 Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla lugubris*)	4 and 1	3	2	4	1	4	1	2	3	= + 13, − 7
75 Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)	3 and 1	4	1	1	4	2	3	1	4	= + 8, − 12
76* Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla lugubris*)	4 and 1	2	3	1	4	0	5	1	4	= + 4, − 16

	Colour. Ground. +	Ground. −	Markings. +	Markings. −	Markings. Form. +	Form. −	Distribution. +	Distribution. −	Result.
Average for both Collections.....	1·80	3·25	1·90	3·10	1·48	3·53	1·55	3·5	= + 6·7, − 13·3

* No. 76 is of my own finding and in my possession.

In making the above analyses, I have stated the case for assimilation more liberally than strict impartiality would have warranted. I have taken no account of differences in size between Cuckoos' eggs and those with which they were placed, although such differences in about half of the examples are monstrous, and many of these small eggs tell statistically more than usually in favour of the theory of assimilation.

Whether the uniform assignment of 5 as the maximum for each of the criteria used in these analyses represents their effective value upon the respective foster-species, is fortunately of little consequence; for, the average results for these characteristics are so nearly uniform that, in assigning a higher value to one, it would be counterbalanced by the lower value assigned to another, the general result not being seriously affected.

Upon the assumption that both of the eggs present in Example 43 are Cuckoos' eggs, they emphasize the fact, otherwise generally observable, that Cuckoos' eggs differing in shape, size, colour, and markings, are laid in nests of the same species. If the first egg be not a Cuckoo's (I incline to accept it as such) it serves to show that the eggs of the foster-species themselves may vary in a way that would lead them to be accepted as Cuckoos' eggs very closely resembling the remainder of the clutch.

The Cuckoo's egg of example 60 lies in glaring contrast to three pure albinos of the Twite in the same nest. Whether this argues lack of discrimination in the Cuckoo, the Twite, or both, makes equally against the case for assimilation.

Examples 2/8, 30, 69, and 70 supply ten instances of blue eggs to which the respective Cuckoo's eggs show not the remotest resemblance. Blue eggs of the Cuckoo are held to be rare ; but, that they should occur is not surprising, seeing that the Yellow-billed, Black-billed and other Cuckoos lay plain blue eggs, and the Great Spotted Cuckoo an egg greenish-blue in the ground. On the contrary, if it be accepted that the Cuckoo can and does, even rarely, lay a blue egg, one might reasonably have expected that, however severely, upon the theory of discrimination, such eggs might be dealt with by foster-species laying eggs of a different type, some of these blue eggs would fall to the share of our fairly numerous layers of blue eggs, who, to judge by the fact that they do not discriminate against the utterly dissimilar mottled eggs now foisted upon them, might have been trusted to hatch eggs that were not dissimilar, thus preserving to us the strain of Cuckoos laying blue eggs.

Blue eggs are said to be laid by the Cuckoo more frequently on the Continent than in the British Isles. It is remarkable that the tendency to produce such a variety should on the Continent be matched by a corresponding discrimination on the part of the Redstart, in whose nest it is said at times to be placed, whilst in the British Isles inability in the Cuckoo to supply such a variety of egg should find our Redstarts equally unable to discriminate against the monstrous make-shifts here foisted upon them. Witness Example 8.

I should, perhaps, add that the "explanatory hypothesis" put forward by Professor Newton

(*Dictionary of Birds:* article *CUCKOW*), was explicitly designed "to fit all round," and may well cover mental reservations not appearing on the surface. If I have ventured to take for examination his statement of the case for assimilation rather than another, it was because it was at once comprehensive and comprehensible, qualities lacking in much that has been written about the Cuckoo; and because its learned author's known sobriety of judgement might be trusted to present only such points of the case for assimilation as were likely to be worth contending for.

Although I have not entered into the question of size in the above analyses, the survey can scarcely be held to be complete even in its most obvious aspects without reference to what is at least as important a feature as colour or markings. I therefore append in the following table particulars showing in what relationship the eggs of the foster-parents stand to that of the Cuckoo in respect to size, taking as the unit a Cuckoo's egg of average size, 1·00 x 0·75 inch— an average well within the mark. This table shows the Cuckoo's egg to be about twice or three times the bulk of the eggs of the birds most frequently employed by it as foster-parents, whilst in other cases it is four, and even five times as large. One is bound to concede that the Cuckoo's egg is remarkably small for so large a bird, but may not one with equal justice urge that foster-parents capable, according to the theory of assimilation, of discriminating secondary characteristics such as those of colour, should not be insensible to the primary distinction of size?

TABLE showing the relative sizes of the eggs of foster-parents of the Cuckoo, a Cuckoo's egg 1·00 × 0·75 inch = 1.

Ring Ousel	...	1·44	
Wheatear	...	·57	
Stonechat	...	·44	
Whinchat	...	·44	
Redstart	...	·44	
Redbreast	...	·57	
Nightingale	...	·57	
Whitethroat	...	·45	
Lesser Whitethroat	...	·34	
Blackcap	...	·46	
Garden Warbler	...	·44	
Willow Wren	...	·25	
Chiffchaff	...	·25	
Wood Wren	...	·31	
Reed Warbler	...	·35	
Sedge Warbler	...	·36	
Hedge Sparrow	...	·44	
Grey Wagtail	...	·40	
Yellow Wagtail	...	·47	
Pied Wagtail	...	·53	
Meadow Pipit	...	·50	
Tree Pipit	...	·50	
Spotted Flycatcher	...	·44	
Greenfinch	...	·47	
Hawfinch	...	·87	
Chaffinch	...	·44	
Lesser Redpoll	...	·20	
Twite	...	·35	
Bullfinch	...	·44	
Yellowhammer	...	.60	
Reed Bunting	...	·46	

A SPRING HERESY

Yesterday was the 21st of December, 1904; fog, frost, sunshine nil. To-day is the 22nd of December, 1904; foggier, frostier, sunshine nil. Traffic by road and rail is wholly disorganised. Upon the city streets men may be seen dimly, "as trees walking;" the vehicles, in unbroken columns, loom up from the gloom, and with peeping lights pass and disappear, their passage like that of some long funeral cortège, slow, solemn, with measured march and all sounds muffled. The unnatural darkness makes children of us; we grope and lose our way.

I met a man in the fog. He had travelled fourteen miles into town in five hours; he was only concerned to find the station and return even if with the same lack of speed. He had "found the station once," he related pathetically, and as he was then standing at the subway exit, I recognised that he must have gone in by the front way and come out again by the back one.

A lady whom I found marooned on a small island in the centre of a great thoroughfare accepted my escort to the kerb, informing me that she had come into town to attend a conversazione, but having been hopelessly lost for an hour past, wished now only to go home again. I brought her to the tramway terminus, remarking consolingly by the way that

"the shortest day had now past," to which she replied that we had "had no day for a week!" There was a rush as the car loomed up and she was swept away, so that I saw no more of her. "She will be all right," I said; "she see facts squarely. There has been no day for a week! A sane mind may indulge its misery to heart's content."

I have long held that the 22nd day of December is the first day of spring. I am perfectly acquainted with all reasons astronomical, physical, and others, which tend to discredit this heresy; but, just as the little maid continued to affirm that, though two of her brethren were in heaven, yet, indeed, they were seven; so, in spite of all gainsaying, I maintain that spring—my spring—consists of six months. If it be urged that three of those have no actual existence on earth, I am willing to allow that they may exist elsewhere, perchance as an intercalation in some celestial calendar. If even this be disallowed, then I ask:—"Why am I compelled to be less curious in my joys than other people in their miseries?" If a man rises in revolt against the general scheme of things because it requires ten hours to travel twenty-eight miles on a foggy day, and spends his spare time circulating unconsciously through the front and back entrances of a railway station, I do not call him to account; I do not suggest that fog is a wholesome chastisement for congested chimneys, and that he, as a right-minded man, should rejoice that Nature at times witholds her besom for the instruction of District Councillors. Nor do I condemn the fair conversazionist's resentment of a week of nights, or question the wisdom of holding a

conversazione in the middle of a fog-bound, frost-bound city. Each, in his or her way, indulges a natural impulse ; each has a capacity for miserableness, and in gratifying it is, as one may say, miserably satisfied.

I, too, am not without my natural impulses. When I went to bed last night I said, "It will be Christmas Day in four days ; but it will be spring to-morrow." I did not make Christmas, or it would probably have been about Lady-day ; but I did make spring—my spring, always understood,—and that is why it falls about Christmas. I was conscious, as I lay, of the sunken sun swinging along on a mighty arc under my bed, and knew that the longest southern day then in progress was the complement of the shortest northern one just past. To-morrow it would rise imperceptibly nearer east and set infinitesimally nearer west than to-day. That was enough ; that would do. A man is free to go to sleep on what thoughts he will. It would be spring in the morning.

I awoke next day to the far-sounding booming of the workmens' "buzzer" a mile away, and to the nearer "triplets" of a church bell summoning the faithful to early devotions. I must explain that I reside in an old-time village with some very extensive modern additions. There is said to be on one side of it a growing town, so considerable as to command the attention of Parliamentary candidates. In it is an enormous works where thousands of workmen are employed. It is for these the "buzzer" sounds. The church bell is slightly the senior of the "buzzer." Before the buzzer was born, the children of light were slack in

well-doing. Seven o'clock devotions were a very uncertain fixture by the bell. But the children of this world altered that. The buzzer brought commercial punctuality to the correction of spiritual laxity. I used at first to detest that bell as a monotonous innovation; but when the buzzer began to bully it into punctuality, I sided with the bell. In my mind I could see the bell-ringer tearing down, half-dressed, to defy the powers of this world and punctuate the sordid droning of the buzzer by his bell-intoned profession of Trinitarian faith. With every desire to recognise the astringent properties of commercial punctuality, and a conviction that but for the buzzer the bell would become a backslider and a public scandal to the faithful, I do not like the buzzer; I do not like the enormous works; I do not like the growing town on the other side of the village: I have never been there; I shall never go; I shall keep to the historic landmarks; I shall hold by the old village.

I was early abroad that first spring morning, the opening of the seventh day of continuous frost and fog—a white, even fog, slowly disengaging itself, as it seemed, like the departing spirit from the stark body of Nature. I set out punctually at the moment when the sun was timed to rise. It was reported to have been seen the day before from the high Peak district in Derbyshire; also from the extreme corner of Kent. Elsewhere for a week, "there had been no day." I was far enough from any such points of vantage in a horizontal direction, but probably not much more than a hundred feet from some aërial spot to which, but for this ponderable body, I might have

shot up through the fog-sea to pay directer homage to the first spring dawn.

As it was, I had in mind many such dawns witnessed from mountain heights where it was my fortune and delight for a time to live thousands of feet above the clouds. Well I knew the scene then being enacted above me, this upper, became a nether sea of cloud, like primal chaos without form and void—"thohoo wa vohoo," as the old Hebrew has it, in words whose hollow vowels have in them something of the actual void our own serve but to suggest by a negative idea. There is no scene on earth so absolute in detachment—an aboriginal solitude, as it seems, wherein is no detail to suggest agency, individualized being, time or place. Looking down upon it, one could imagine that this visible nothingness had always been, would never cease to be. But slowly the east flushes a dull purple—a thing so different, so far off across that vast grey floor of cloud, as to seem an effluence from some brighter world. Left and right it creeps, a tide that at first combs lazily some distant strand with waves that glow through richening purples into carmine, then ripples farther aside and begins to flow forward, a broadening sea of orange and gold, washing each swelling cloudbank, burnishing each vapoury hummock with ever rarer hues, so that florist and lapidary themselves must despair of finding fit name or symbol for them. At last the central sun himself comes up. The colours of all things living are his ministers ; they are formed and transformed endlessly before him as with haste to do him service. The very air is tense with light. He who has looked down

upon this upper glory of the dawn has seen the ineffable. His own words mock him. The memory of such scenes becomes part of conscience, a touchstone for after moods.

But that was far away and long ago, and I must needs picture for myself a sort of inverted sunset as now heralding the advent of spring to those bright upper spaces visible only to the mind's eye through the closely drawn fog.

Nevertheless, here below, during this week of nights, some fine-fingered Ariel had been at his work. Continuous frost had loaded the trees as only snow might have done. But with how great a difference. Those tricksy spirits of air that fashion the snowflakes, fling them down carelessly, as if making were the end of making, not the fabric made; and that dull miser, gravitation, who claims each errant speck of dust, must needs have these bright things of air also to pile up undistinguishably on the earth, and to shelve in shapeless masses on the winter leaves and branches. The beauty of snow is in the flake: after that there is no intermediate state; only at the other extreme snow, in the mass, as seen in the whitened landscape, exchanges beauty for grandeur, with something of solemnity in the broad, hushed spaces, massiveness being of the essence of both.

Those busy sprites that aloft fashion the fine filigree of the snowflake have been here also for a week past in the still, white fog—myriad artificers perched about on every jutting spine, skirting precarious leaf borders, occupying, in short, all those sharp points and edges with which vegetal nature cuts and pierces the surrounding air. And as if to draw

one to observe this finer action of the frost, the thick mist cuts off the general view, limiting the vision, as one moves, to a series of natural vignettes. Now a lithe young poplar, coated about with frost, shows like some massively limbed candelabrum wrought in stucco; now the encased twigs of a section of thorn hedge, as impervious to light as when in summer foliage, mimics the heavy branchery of coral. Then a full-leafed holly lends itself to more delicate workmanship, and discloses the manner of its accomplishment. Around each leaf a thick, chenille-like border has been formed, so high that one must look down from above to find the unfrosted face of the leaf, yet following its contour so truly that this border reflects each successive spine and loop upon which the whole structure has been built.

Lying upon the top of a low stone wall, and sheltered by the tree, is a single holly leaf. Frost-stuff has run short down here, the sheltered conditions were unpropitious; but the artist, with scantier material and retarding influences, has achieved a more significant work. The leaf lies with its glossy dark green face upwards, clear of frost, as are also the edges looped from spine to spine. The downward-turned spines, like legs of some strange creeping leaf-insect, support it; upon the upturned ones the little craftsman has expended all his art for a week past. Clutching evanescent atomies of moisture from the air, he conveyed them to the tips only of his upturned spines. So rarely they came that the great structure he had in mind to build was starved. For he, too, like his brethren in the tree above him, had his dream of a dense chenille border

to knit up those spiny points and undulate opulently like fur of frost about his leaf. But by the rule and mystery of the craft, the points must first be served, ere crystals might cluster on the intervening loops. For the spine-tips are like frost-magnets, and until satisfied deflect that fine stuff-of-crystals that might have strayed to the near edges of the leaf. Even so, the spines themselves have been starved, and the meagre material has gone to form tenuous, hair-like crystals of a fineness eluding the eye. Upon each spine is a cluster of such, a floret, a rosette, and the fallen leaf, so adorned, has the aspect of a coronet ringed about with delicate frost-plumes. And so our little frost-manikin, like some of larger stature, failed of his high purpose, but failed more nobly than he knew. Spines first!—and he did it.

Following the 'Edge'—the tree-clad edge of higher ground overlooking lower-lying flats—we observe that for the seventh day the rooks are absent from the rookery. Every morning by sunrise they are there, residents in summer, visitants from distant sleeping-quarters in winter; but, throughout the week of fog, they have been entirely absent. This would seem natural enough if we judged them by human standards; but there is a theory, widely held, that birds are endowed with a 'sense of direction.' Such a theory is advanced in explanation of the fact that migrating birds generally make their way with confidence and precision between those countries in which they pass the nesting season and those where they winter, and *vice versa.* If birds are in possession of such a sense of direction, one would have thought that our rooks, passing to and fro

daily during six months of each year over a space of four miles separating the rookery from their winter sleeping quarters, would have it so confirmed by the frequent passage as to be able to locate the rookery even in a fog. The fact that in open weather they invariably visit the rookery daily but during fog they do not visit it, makes it evident that they cannot find it, the reason being that they are guided by sight and not by a sense of direction, an explanation that it seems safe to extend to the case of migrating birds, always thrown off their course, more or less, by fog.

At Turn Moss—how long will these delightful old names last?—the redbrick horrors of the jerry builder are spreading out over the land like some feverous rash;—at Turn Moss, we turn aside into meadows that once were mossland, and still are subject to frequent inundation.

Entering a field, in which the ploughed-up clods have been frozen into rock-like hardness, I rouse the Skylarks from their sleeping places in the hollows between them. Skylarks in a fog—what a conjunction! Their musical "*Pr.r.r!*" sounds on all sides as the birds flutter forward, to drop at once to earth, uncertain of their course and mine. Among them is a bird with a strange "*peep*"-ing note, repeated time after time as I stumble over the uneven ground. Each time it sounds it leaves me unsatisfied that I have clearly heard, and so I follow on to hear again. But, the elusive "*peep!*" is as perplexing to the ear as the bird itself is invisible to the eye. Following it, I strike the edge of a small pond known as Sally's Hole.

Often enough I have wondered who Sally was, and how this pond came to be called by her name.

Many a strenuous life has been spent to make a less enduring name. To make a name—what a commentary is here! No doubt, as is usual, there went to the making of Sally's immortality a person, a deed, a name. Who she was or what she did, no one now knows. Her name, linked, like enough by tragedy, with this small, deep pond, reputed bottomless, passes hourly unheeded from mouth to mouth in the countryside, and only some stranger, provoked by curiosity, will ask at times—"Who was Sally?" to be answered by a look of silent surprise from those who never reflected that there went with it once a human life distinct from, albeit, perchance, tragically connected with, this Hole that still bears her name. In a few years the public surveyor will plumb its mythical depths and, levelling it up, make way for the suburban artisan. Sally, with her fame or shame, will be heard of no more in the ways of the living.

Strangely enough, when approaching this spot early one spring morning ere any one was abroad, I noticed a woman seated on the bottom bar of a broken fence that guards the pond. Seeing she was engaged in coiling up her hair, which hung loosely at her back, I prepared to pass without regarding her. But as I went by she spoke, and, turning, I took from her a sheet of paper she held out by her left hand. "I have lost my right arm," it ran (I saw that the arm alleged to be missing was hidden closely in her shawl), and proceeded to ask for assistance.

She was a diminutive gipsy-like creature, with black, wandering eyes, and a mass of black hair of which she was evidently not uncareful.

I was about to pass on when she asked, "Is this where the tide comes?" I told her it was but a pond, and that it was the wind that made the froth on the leeside of it. "Ain't this the Mersey?" she asked. I pointed where the river ran a few fields distant. "What it said in the bible," she went on abstractedly, looking on the ground, "Ain't this where the Philistones comed?"—then, looking up, as if in explanation—"where they throwed in the gold?"

I looked at the woman, and then at the pond, wondering if indeed they were there; or if I, perhaps, were elsewhere, dreaming of a phantom pond from which this wraith of Sally herself had crept out to question me. Seeing me doubtful, she asked further, "Ain't there the little bridge where the tide comes?" I told her we were thirty miles from the sea and no tide came so far. "My husband brought me to the little bridge to see the tide come," she persisted; then, putting the sheet of paper between the leaves of a book she carried, "I can't remember," she said, "it's too much trouble to remember."

I saw that she was crazed, and left her. But, after I had gone fifty yards, I turned to look, and saw that she was standing to watch me, her hair and shawl blown about by the wind.

"Ain't there the little bridge?" she called wearily. But I went on; for I had twice before seen betwixt bridge and tide that which had found them only too well, but would seek neither any more.

How restricted are the beats of some birds during their winter sojourn in any part, is more than usually

forced upon the attention at a time of continual fog, and even the added sting of persistent frost fails to drive in some species to the neighbourhood of houses.

The vigorously rattled note of a Common Wren drew me where the bird was worming its way through the frost-laden hedge, scattering the dense white powder when it perched or fluttered from twig to twig. Who that has watched a Wren but knows the quick, straight look with which it ceases for a moment from its search to observe the observer? There is in it more of surprise than of suspicion. "Well, what is it?" he seems to inquire, like one disturbed in more serious occupation, his small body bent forward on his perch and head depressed as he fixes you with sidelong glance. "What do you want? Thought you were going on. Cold? Of course, it's cold. Spring—is it? No, sir; no grubs, no spring. '*Tr.r.r.r.r!*'" and the intensely practical little wretch drops in a small artic blizzard of frost dust into the hedge packing, where we leave him torturing dead leaves to disclose lethargic larvæ waiting for the mythic spring. He is always here, wandering up and down this strip of hedge—the Hawthorn Lane Wren.

If asked how we know, we can only answer that "we know." For we, too, have a restricted beat, an inner circle in our wanderings, as it were, wherein we revolve so frequently and regularly that we come to know our own birds individually, so as to recognise their presence or absence as one might the presence or absence of human associates in the daily round of life.

Within that continental system of geography that defines localities as farms, roads, lanes, rivers, brooks,

and the like, exists a secondary system of minutely localised points—Swift Corner, Martins' Beat, Yellow-hammer Hedge, Stoat Bank, Kestrels' Look-out, Sandpiper Bend, Swarming-Tree, and others too numerous to mention, constituting a scheme of geography purely personal in its origin and application. Birds and groups of birds are known to us individually at certain points, and few strangers can invade our territory without immediate detection. If any have known the pleasures of roaming only, let them learn the new, and equally intense pleasure of concentration. A few square miles of ground, diversified by field and farmstead, tree and hedgerow, orchard, garden, and copse, with a length of stream, a pond or two, a brook and ditch-ways, a patch of marsh and water meadow,—with no more than this, one has scope for infinite labour and delight, and withal a sense of intimate comprehension and control such as cannot belong to observation conducted over a wide area wherein one is little more than a stranger at any point. Over such a limited space the seasons pass with their changing life: spring migrants invade it from the equator, staying to nest or passing on farther north; autumn migrants pass over it in their journey from Arctic breeding quarters, or remain in it to winter. It is never long without change, it is never desolate, for, as one group arrives, the other departs, and as if to knit up the incoming and outgoing populations, the residents quit it in some cases neither in winter nor in summer, jealous in the exclusive tenacity with which they guard the chosen haunt.

Another bird of the open, keeping rigidly to its

own beat by the hawthorn hedge, is the Hedge-sparrow. It may nest in the neighbourhood of houses, in which case it will enter gardens as part of its recognised territory. Still, even then, its habit of hopping quietly by itself, avoiding the contentious company of House-sparrows and Starlings, Blackbirds and Thrushes, stamps it a solitary. The Robin, too, is solitary, but will advance, proud and erect, into the midst of the most heterogeneous mob of mendicants to share the good things going—with them, but not of them—and having satisfied himself, go his own way at once; but the little brown hermit of the hedgerow with smoke grey cowl, goes meekly and alone, hopping demurely on the side-walk with head depressed, or tripping in and out at the foot of the hedge, gathering unconsidered trifles as he goes. Fog and frost will not force him from his habitual haunt, though it be in the open land; and from the hedgerow where he sang by the nest in earliest spring, where he remained the summer through, and whence, save for a short interval of autumn silence, he called with his single, melancholy "*Peep!*" throughout the fall, he now sends his plaintive cry over the fog-wrapped, frost-bound land.

Wren, Robin, and Dunnock, solitaries all, how distinct in their personalities, and yet common in this, that Britishers have recognised in them, jointly or severally, types of homely virtues—independence, energy, boldness, reserve—typical also of the best of their race. If any doubt this, let him pass in review other birds as closely associated with his domestic life as these—House-sparrow and Starling, Blackbird

and Thrush, the Tit and Finch tribes—and note the appeal each makes to his mind.

A long strip of manure dressing covering spring rhubarb stretches from hedge to hedge across a field close by, itself usually covered by a horde of Starlings. In fog and frost the birds were there, invisible to me, scarcely visible to one another, and yet as irrepressible as ever, their shrill, contending voices sounding all along the line.

As I moved about the fields, quite unable to direct my course, Missel-thrushes and Fieldfares rose almost at my feet, the loud, rattling note of the former, and the "*Whiup! whiup!*" and "*Uch-uch-úchut!*" of the latter, sounding unnaturally loud in the still, thick air. They, too, are unable to shape any course, and flying a little apart, resettle, to be disturbed again a minute later, so that I seem to be performing an intimate progress through continuous flocks of these usually very wary birds.

Striking the lane again, I come out by what I recognise as 'The Orchard.' I hear, as I think, someone talking in the trees: "*I . . I . . tak' 'em! I . . I . . tak' 'em!*" this personage tells himself in a self-satisfied, peculiarly *staccato* manner. "Oh, you do, do you?" said I, remembering a good many beings of one sort or another who 'took 'em,' *scilicet*, pears and apples from the orchard in the preceding autumn. As soon as the dead leaves begin to rustle beneath my feet, the talking ceases; and as my object is to make the self-confessed delinquent declare himself, I take no pains to conceal my presence. In spite of her cover in thick wood and fog, Mag gets restive, begins to chatter, becoming

more and more excited as I approach, till at last she launches herself upon what must have the appearance of infinite space. Arrived on the farther side of the river, she continues for minutes afterwards to send back her loudly chattered protest. The Magpie is much given to this subdued soliloquizing, subdued, that is, as compared with its loud, chattering cry, and one must be fortunately placed to hear it well.

As I follow the river bank, the note of a solitary Pied Wagtail indicates its presence beside the water, from which in all probability it has been unable to break away during the week of fog and frost. Half-a-dozen of these birds remain on this stretch of the river every winter. Seeing that in early spring and late summer Pied Wagtails frequent the Mersey and the adjoining water meadows in this neighbourhood to the number of from one to two hundred at a time, and that some half-dozen only remain to winter with us, it seems remarkable that any at all should continue when so great a majority depart.

The same may be said of the Meadow Pipit, of which great numbers continue with us for a time in spring and autumn, but only a few are to be seen during winter. The high-pitched "*Wheet! wheet!*" of a couple of these birds, repeated several times as they flew out over the foggy river and back to the bank further on, was so resonant in the dense atmosphere, that one might easily have mistaken it for the note of the Common Sandpiper or Summer Snipe, were this bird a sojourner with us during the dead season. Indeed, the resemblance between these two birds is all the more striking for the lack of any outward correspondence between them. The one a

Snipe-like bird, brown above and white below, and the other with mottled brown plumage like that of a Lark, they should be seen together by the water side fully to appreciate how similar in their actions may be two birds so dissimilar in their appearance. Both frequent river banks and moist places, running hither and thither with the same walking gait and with the same up-and-down wagging of the tail; both are largely upland breeders; their notes when heard apart are all but indistinguishable save for the greater volume of that of the Sandpiper: yet, the Pipit lays its Lark-like eggs in a Lark-like nest, and like a Lark usually mounts to deliver its song in the air, whilst the Sandpiper lays the four large eggs typical of the Snipe tribe, and like all the latter has a vocal performance—in his case a simple trilling—more curious than musical.

As I approached a strip of hawthorn hedge running down to the edge of the river, a Kestrel, whose near presence on the hedge top was as great a surprise to me as my approach appeared to be to the bird itself, cut back and away into the fog. As usual, it was a —I might almost say the—female bird; for during a large portion of each year, and sometimes throughout the year, such a female Kestrel works this particular spot. It is so local in its feeding range that I seldom go out without seeing it; and I know it to be the same bird by its perching regularly in certain trees and hunting habitually in certain places. For two years it left us in mid-winter and for the breeding season, but in 1904 it appeared regularly throughout the summer, and in August of that year two birds were with us together. They hovered together, and

kept together when disturbed, continuing thus from the 20th August until the 1st September, after which the old female remained alone throughout the winter.

Proceeding further along the river, I found that Blackbird and Throstle had been forced from the frozen fields to seek sustenance by the flowing water; and the "*Trit!*" of a Yellowhammer and churring of a Blue-tit showed these birds also to be feeding in a strange place. In fact, the Mersey, during the prolonged frost, had become a sort of river of life to a motley assemblage of birds, ranging from the Kestrel to the Blue-tit, that had had the good fortune to find their way to its banks. Although "*pink*"-ing out cheerily from time to time, a company of a score of Chaffinches remained, as if blanketed down, in a spot where they appeared first at the middle of December, and where, through fog and clear, frost and thaw, they continued until the third week of January.

A canvass by the river would, I fear, have found few among the feathered tribes ready at that time to recognise the advent of spring. Yet, I was wiser in my generation than I knew. For, about eleven o'clock in the forenoon of the eve of Christmas, a light air from the south-east began to feel its way through the fog, and in less than an hour the week-old pall was lifted entirely from the land.

What a scene it disclosed! For a short time the bright mid-day sun looked along a landscape white as far as eye could see—white in the plains, white where the distant hills stood forward, as it were, with a strange show of nearness. By long accretion of frost-crystals each blade of grass in the fields had gathered

about it lateral processes that gave to it the bulk and form of heather—blanched heather closely packed to deceive the eye, but crumbling to dust beneath the foot. The field hedgerows, quadrangular reefs of whitest coral near at hand, appeared like solid walls of chalk a few fields away. The trees, with whitened trunks, and branches and twigs swollen to unnatural bulk, stood like petrifications of some strange vegetation of another age and clime.

A whole week had gone to the building of this wonderful scene, in windless air beneath a protective screen of fog; in half an hour the screen was drawn softly but wholly aside, and the noon sun lighted it from an unclouded sky. Rarely can a great artist have been more favoured in the preparation and exhibition of his work; but only one of Nature's own craftsmen, working in the imperishable stuff of frost and water, water and frost, with a world-old art, could have borne to see it thus at once transfigured and destroyed.

For, spring had come indeed. The fields, for a short time lustrous in their perfect whiteness; the hedge-bordered lanes—wondrous perspectives!—bedecked as for some triumphal fairy pageant; the trees, massively white with accumulated frost, steamed and streamed for an hour beneath the gently insinuative influence of the south, so that the whole land seemed to be in flux.

And there where I had seen them ere the general fog enwrapped them a week before, was many a bird or group of birds. They had flitted hither and thither within narrow bounds, apparently without attempting to escape from their darkened haunts. But, with

earth and heaven restored once more to view, the Kestrel left mousing from hedge-tops to stretch her wings in hovering flight; Blackbird and Throstle returned to hug the hedgerows; Fieldfares scattered abroad in the open lands; bands of Skylarks flitted prattling from field to field; Yellowhammers passed higher in jerky flight, dropping their liquid note like water striking water as they went; Chaffinches "*pink*"-ed aloud, or sallied forth "*tiu tiu*"-ing for a short excursion across the river. The Grey Wagtail, too, was there by the water's edge, where he had been throughout the fall; a bird so limited in his wanderings during his winter sojourn with us, that it was scarcely ever more than a hundred yards from two well-known spots. Everywhere was sound and movement, as of new life sprung from the loosened earth. Even the Starlings left for a while the manure dressing on the spring rhubarb, and, clustered thickly on the dead top branches of a high tree, wheezed and whistled, clucked and chuckled to the on-coming spring.

And so, in spite of winter solstices and the First Point of Aries, I went down to my own house justified.

"TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED"

As a natural reaction from a Christmas-day spent for the most part within doors, the following day drew me out early into the open country—into the wider family circle of those less than children, the children of the wild. Frost and impenetrable fog had held the land for a week, and then at once a south wind crept in opening a way for the winter sun. For an hour on each side of noon it had its way, stripping from whitened field, tree and hedge-row the thick rime, which yielded up the ghost as a thin blue mist fain to be gathered into the hollows and waterways, and glide away and be gone. Then followed a night that glazed the drenched land, and tipped anew as with some soft fur of frost each tiniest projection, be it spine, leaf edge, or what not; and the late dawn looked again along the land, freed from the rigours, but resigned to the tempered chastening, of the north.

By what name should one call this time of year? 'Winter' is gross, for winter, as most men know it, is largely of their own making. Unconscious nomads in whom the dormant instinct stirs uneasily at times, they scatter abroad with the opening year. One will to the hill tops to feel the free sky above him, another to the sea-board to face the open sea.

Society, that mother of humbug, winks at her minion's mutiny, knowing that he will not have gone far ere his liberty become a burden to him, and he hasten to join himself to others similarly minded to make of many vanities a semblance of substantial fellowship. For man, who at first banded with his fellows for fear of other men, has in the end come to fear himself. To be alone is to cease to be; unless, indeed, he catch at times too real a vision of himself as in some magic mirror of solitude, with heaven knows what strange shadows beside.

But in winter the excursive, separatist impulse yields to a sort of dull hibernating instinct. Like birds that at this time pack and close in to the farmsteads that form their feeding centres, men mass and move in crowds, converging hither for the "season," thither for some high "function," but whether here or there, always herding more closely, crowding to the centre.

Without stands Nature, if indeed there be any "without" with her who was with them when they were not and will take them when they are no more, in the meanwhile dandling their social puppet on her knee—a rickety infant of doubtful sanity. Without is that Nature on whose feet is no mire of cities, and whose brow is untroubled by their breath of smoke. For this is she who moves in spacious ways; in her eyes is morning, the closing of her eyelids is the coming-on of night. Strong mother of the strong, she tries their thews and laughs at their hurts; she hides her secrets in dark places, lest they should find them and grow slack; but for the herdling she is like needles in his joints.

Here on this old Chester Road long ago tramped flat by feet of Roman legionaries marching Chesterwards—Chester, their *castra*, supreme among many camps—we tramp after them on this 26th December, 1904; after them in time, albeit in a sense with them still. Great tramps were these Romans; they tramped hither from Rome; and while the excursive spirit lasted, they throve from the fringe of empire to the centre. So we go with them; for we too in our way have the excursive spirit.

By the excursive spirit I do not mean that mind that plans a time, a place, a route, and some set objective which, having been attained, there follows again time, place, and route, as in some programme of ceremonies. He who would know the excursive spirit should be all but absolute in his ways. Roads may serve, but must not bind him; he will break no man's enclosure, trample no man's crops, and obtrude himself upon no man's privacy; but he will claim to set his foot upon every square inch of free soil: for neither he nor the land is enslaved. Without any predetermined destination he will roam as chance or passing choice may lead him, now to some haunt of birds, now by some quiet stream, having forsaken the ways of men as if for ever. Before him is the expanse of earth, the whole body of Nature, the eternity of a day to which he refuses for the time being to set mental bound. So only can a man cancel the limitations of his state, and for a time live that ampler life which is indeed the life of the world.

In his wanderings he will probably often enough stumble up against our rural friend, "Trespassers will be prosecuted." This old fellow is not so fierce

as he looks. At first, painted white and set upright in his place, he commands a passive respect, and conveys the impression that the old lord of the manor has just died, and that his successor has been making a violent study of the geography of his newly acquired domains. As time goes by he mellows down: resentful boys throw pats of clay at him; birds of the air settle upon and further disfigure him; but the critical point at which he loses for ever our respect, is when through violent collision or subsidence of the soil he strikes an angle of about thirty degrees to the perpendicular. We pity him, but we cannot respect him any more. Still, having known this old party intimately all my life, and having found him in one place or another in every stage of declination between the upright and complete prostration, I feel a certain softness for his weaknesses. He is very old, probably aboriginal, for I never heard of a predecessor; and although so old, he clings still with refreshing faith to the promise of his youth—"Trespassers *will be* prosecuted"—the tense of what may be called the permanent indefinite future.

I have known but one reputable variant of the old legend, the work of a rhyming Cheshire squire, who set up his sign—

> This road forbidden is to all
> Save such as wend their way to call
> At Mill o' Green or Arley Hall.

I had proceeded three-fourths of the way along the forbidden path when I learned from a maid that the rhyming squire had been long dead. I found

others of his rhymes on the sign-posts about Arley, and it is always a pleasure to come upon them in my rambles; but I fear that this cheerful wit, who knew how to temper prohibition with poesy, will have faded from the memory of man long ere his prosier brother has ceased to predict that "Trespassers will be prosecuted."

This question of trespass is an ancient one. The first recorded case would appear to be that of the Serpent at Eden, and he was forthwith mulcted in heavy damages not yet paid into court. Adam and Eve being quite without ancestry, could scarcely claim patrician extraction like, say, the heir to a Victorian peerage; they were simple care-takers, and the Serpent had therefore to settle accounts directly with the Lord of the Manor, then an extensive one. This last title, being very ancient, has never been contested at law. This is important, because, whilst the landed class of no country appears to base its title to territorial distinction upon its descent from our first parents, a few hardy monarchs of our own time still claim possession by divine right; and, indeed, unless this be granted, there would seem to be no logical basis at all for a law of trespass. For, unless it be conceded that William of Normandy—to use a modern instance—really came in the name of the Lord by which he swore so valiantly, Doomsday-book itself might be impugned. Some rulers, however, with more wit than their lords-in-waiting, refuse unduly to press their claim to right divine, with the result that to some extent the earth is still the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and trespassers upon the land of, say, a political baronet, for ever 'w ill

be,' but never 'can be,' effectively prosecuted at law. The Law has seldom shown more insight and, one may add, prudence. Trespass with damage, however, is another matter; and he who, when on another man's property, cannot respect it as he would claim to have his own respected, may take his chance so far as we are concerned.

Whilst on this question of trespass with damage, let us consider it from the point of view of those who, without being lords of manors, still are custodians of a territory upon which very real trespass and damage is committed by some who are.

As I desire to forestall the ever ready retort as to "sickly sentimentality," I will approach the matter upon grounds which will be intelligible to all concerned. It will probably be allowed that, as payers of income tax and such other dues as a provident Government sees fit for our good to demand from us, we have discharged what it considers the first duty of practical patriotism. In proportion to our possessions we have contributed appreciably—to put the matter moderately—toward the upkeep of the British Empire; and having set out our wooden, or as matters now stand, copper-sheathed walls, we are free to discuss among ourselves what exactly it is each of us desires to have defended from its enemies within our own confines.

Some of us like to think that we are possessed of a native, and therefore a national, fauna, as real as, but considerably more important than, our National Debt. The latter we can pay off when so-minded; defects in the former not all the gold of Ophir will make good. This native fauna we hold to be the

property of the nation at large; and if any section of the community claims special privilege to make away with a part of it, we would know upon what authority.

It has for centuries past been the custom of a minute portion of our population to preserve game-birds for shooting and sale, otherwise called sport. This pursuit they follow with that lack of individuality which is perhaps their chief characteristic as a class. What they do, they all do together, and in the same way. This uniformity, due only to imitation, has the effect of thoroughness.

That men should be at pains to preserve non-indigenous species such as the Pheasant, or selected indigenous species such as the Red Grouse, would be matter for congratulation if we did not know that any interference with so finely balanced a scheme as Nature, starts a chain of consequences beyond man's knowledge and control. No sooner has he begun to cultivate Pheasant, Grouse, and Partridge—in most cases to the deterioration of the birds themselves, as could scarcely fail to be the case—than he finds himself in opposition to their natural enemies, feathered or furred, outnumbering them as ten to one. Immediately he draws up an Expurgatory Index comprising among birds: Jay, Magpie, Jackdaw, Carrion and Hooded Crows, Raven, Hen-harrier, Marsh-harrier, Montagu's Harrier, Buzzard, Golden Eagle, White-tailed Eagle, Sparrow-Hawk, Kite, Peregrine Falcon, Hobby, Merlin, Osprey, Honey-buzzard, &c., not to dilate upon the equally selfish slaughter of Osprey and Kingfisher by fish preservers, and the perfectly insane destruction of mousing Kestrels and Owls by those who have

most reason to be thankful for their services. These birds are down to be trapped or shot, not in so many words, for it would require more knowledge than one game-preserver in fifty possesses to describe half-a-dozen of them. "Hawk, Crow, Owl" is written large across the lot, so that he who runs may shoot, and the gamekeeper, having received his instructions, applies himself with equal zeal and probably greater knowledge to carry them out. It is the bald truth to say that this list contains nearly all that is noblest amongst British Breeding Birds. Indeed, some of them can no longer claim that title, the extirpated clan of breeding birds being represented by members of the species appearing only as visitors or passengers in these islands; other species, represented by a few pairs breeding under protection, exist by such indulgence only.

The game-preserver may reply that not he alone is answerable for this state of things. I grant him, therefore, such satisfaction as he may derive from association in this work with bird-catcher and bird-stuffer, and that less intelligible compound of greed and stupidity—the amateur (not to mention the professional) collector. But he must recognise that his associates come to their work as a rule only when a species has been sufficiently reduced in number to impart to the eggs and skin a value that makes it worth the while for these mercenaries to put forth strenuous efforts to obtain them. That many species have been so reduced we lay without hesitation to the charge of game-preservers. They have, indeed, but one reputable associate in their work, and that is the draining of marshes and reclaiming of waste

lands, by which they have become unsuited to the needs of their former occupants. If game-preservers desire to make such changes largely answerable for the reduction in number of many species accustomed to breed in these areas, it is obvious that the more effectively such causes operate in thinning their ranks, the more culpable becomes the co-operation of human agents. If a bird is expatriated by the advance of agriculture, is it to be extirpated by the whim of sport? In any case, whatever be the share of the game-preserver in this work of extirpation, there is one charge that but a very small number of the more sportsman-like of them will repel—they have done their *utmost* to make it complete. What is left is left not by grace, but through inability wholly to slaughter off birds that have reached their present eminence of beauty, power and craft by ages of struggle more than man, as such, has endured, and are still game for the fight with half a chance in a fair field.

Some birds have at all times such protection as law can afford, others during the breeding season only; but birds such as those enumerated above have no close season. Indeed, the breeding season is the time best adapted to, and most used for their slaughter, this being the time when for a few weeks they have a settled abode, so that they may be shot upon the nest, or in their passage to and from it.

That the use of that infernal engine, the pole-trap, has been made penal, we have to thank a few enlightened legislators with a backing of public opinion, as against many of our game-preservers who sanctioned, but refrained from defending its use.

But by trap and gun the slaughter still goes on, and there is one remedy for it only—the determined expression of the will of the British people that it will have British birds bullied no longer.

For, as surely as a man has but one country, a bird also has but one; and he would be a bold disputant who contended that this was only objectively, and not to some extent also subjectively, true, in face of the assertion by so calm a reasoner as Professor Newton that it is the "passionate love of the old home" that brings the migrant back to the old nesting spot. But whether this be disputed or not does not affect the practical fact that a bird has but one country, that it breeds there, and that it will not go to breed elsewhere. The Thrush that comes to us to avoid the rigours of a northern winter will not stay to nest with the home Thrushes, though the fact that the latter remain in this country to breed is proof that the former do not leave it because of any unsuitability of climate or lack of food. It is not their country; that is all. They are not British members of the species. Kill off your British-breeding birds, and no summer migrants, extending their range from the south, will face a sea passage that has not formed part of the past history of their own compatriots, in order to fill the places left vacant by the extirpated indigenous birds; no winter visitors, due away northward to their own nesting countries, will remain to take advantage of your empty trees and hedgerows. You have made your wilderness: water it.

In extenuation of the destruction of certain classes of birds as the result of game-preserving, the plea is often advanced that by the creation of protected

coverts an asylum is afforded to many of the smaller species,—an asylum rendered all the more secure by the exclusion of rapacious ones. This is a benefaction we gladly recognise, but which, being unintentional scarcely commands our gratitude. Besides, the protection thus incidentally—one might say accidentally—afforded some small birds, in no way compensates the wholesale destruction of the larger and rarer ones. Further, the plea assumes that these two sets of birds are mutually exclusive; but Nature managed to balance accounts without detriment to either ere man took upon himself to intervene; she piloted the tiny Goldcrest through the ages ere Nimrod became "a mighty hunter before the Lord"—*anglice* big-game hunter.

One is disposed to wonder what sort of fame this same Nimrod would have gotten himself among the nations, with a double-barrel sputtering shot enough to cover the side of a house. To have it in hand is a reflection upon one's marksmanship. It is significant enough that it should be pre-eminently the weapon of present-day sportsmen. I speak not wholly without warrant. I have done little enough covert-skipping, but on more than one occasion in forests that span a continent I have stood, to maul or be mauled, with a single barrel between me and that which would have made beaters skip. It may be urged that the choice of weapon is a matter of taste. I grant it; but if a man shoots to shoot, let him stand by his shot, and give his quarry "law" to the extent of his own bad aim. This double-barrel business is but machine-fire. What is this beating of coverts and hallooing of yokels to set up a parcel

of hand-reared pheasants to blunder scared out of their wits across a battery of half a dozen double-barrels? this driving of grouse or driving of anything —what is it? Sport? Sportsmen who have spent their powder on something more able to hit back than these might well ask to be aped at more respectful distance.

For the greater part of a day the coverts resounded with what seemed for all the world like ill-fired volleys, and one could not away with the thought that it was for this stupid slaughter of a half-domesticated fowl that those single shots ring out year in, year out, dropping one after another of the noblest of the winged kind. These are slaughtered that those too may be preserved for final destruction; the nobler by the hand of the menial, the meaner often by the noble's hand.

I mention neither name nor place; there is nothing in these notes that will furnish even a distant clue to either. My concern is not with places and individuals, but with a country and a principle. Abler pens than mine should do this work; abler spokesmen have to some extent done it. But I have watched them, sick of the hubbub, half retract their words, and turn back from the blatant vanities of a time with which they had nothing in common to the ampler, quieter ways of Nature that is so much more.

We, too, in the end, found peace in a deep hollow by the border of a quiet lake. The Wren rattled a salutation to us from the yellow reeds; Tree-creepers glided mouse-like on the bare boles and branches of trees that, shut in by the steep slope behind, had continued to grow and grow, thirsting for the southern

YOUNG TREE-CREEPERS CREEPING

sunlight it intercepted, until at last their lofty crests take the directer rays, and are content. Beneath a great spreading beech an exclusive company of ten Great-tits, buried in the thick carpet of fallen leaves, tossed them overhead and aside as they searched the ground below. From time to time one sprang up on to a branch, and holding a beech nut down hammered it for a moment, then let it fall, being mindful of more succulent insect morsels to be had beneath the leafy carpet to which he at once returned. On the next grassy tongue of land a score of Coots and Moorhens dabbled and fed; and, mixing with them, Mallards cropped the herbage with low-quacked satisfaction. Shyer than these, a flotilla of some fifty Tufted Ducks, ceasing from diving by the reeds, moved out to the open water—little black craft with snow-white paddle-boxes, so ordered and stately in their progress that one could have imagined them to be attached to some floating framework that bore them out each in its place, unmoved. Further out on the water a few Herring-gulls flew and settled and flew again with querulous cries: the sea was thirty miles away. Beside us, on a low thorn, a Ringdove, with puffed breast and head drawn in, sat dozing,—a strange hunched-up figure, the white patch on whose throat became distinct only when, at the report of a still distant gun, the bird cut back like a flash over the thorn and away to high covert on the farther side of the water.

For a long time we had been sitting there noting all these trivial, but pleasant things, when, upon glancing at the base of a tree ten paces from me, I noticed for the first time another hunched form.

Indeed, near as I was, my eye would have passed it, though so large and ruddy, had not the white ear-tips arrested it. Seeing these, I recognised that a hare had been resting quietly all the time at so short a distance from us, showing no sign of apprehensiveness beyond perfect stillness, and a drooping of the eyelid so as partly to conceal the prominent eye. It had probably been drawn to this quiet spot by the presence of so many wild fowl. For animals have their freemasonry; creatures so far apart as fur and feather recognise at once each others signs of alarm, and are equally indifferent to cries and movements, however violent, that are not expressive of fear. Thus the proverbial March hare may chase as madly as he will among the statuesqe Lapwings, and the old rabbit drive her young round in giddy circles where Thrush and Blackbird feed, the birds remain uninterested in their headlong chase and gambols, much less provoked to fear. So the Lapwing may dash to and fro with his wild love cry where rabbits browse and hares are sleeping; neither is disturbed. But let a Lapwing rise with querulous alarm-note, and the shapeless brown bundles dotted about the field at once become suspicious hares, erect with ears erect; and as one lopes across the field, pausing at times with backward glance, birds accept the sign without question and take flight.

We stayed a long time with the gentle brute, and withdrawing left him undisturbed. The guns were working across the open from a distant covert, and I had no mind to stay and see it hunted from its retreat.

But fate willed otherwise with me that day. Half

an hour later we were loitering in a quiet lane with open fields around us when a large body of men armed with stout sticks appeared breaking through the hedges with the proverbial contempt born of familiarity. Captained by scarlet-vested keepers, they were distributed in a great circle so as to enclose several large fields, retrievers—fine, black, docile brutes—sitting at heel with a dignity that distinguished them from those in charge of them.

Just outside this circle, and using a powerful glass, I commanded the field more thoroughly than those within it. Several hares had been enclosed in the circle, as yet too large to cause them alarm. In the central fields were the guns, five of them, as I learned upon enquiry. They were engaged in killing off the cock pheasants and finishing up the hares.

Immediately a hare is started in one of the outer fields. He makes off toward the central one and, finding it apparently empty, slackens speed. Then comes the first shot, and he bounds forward undeceived; a second follows, and so on down the whole battery, hearing which I recognise the ill-regulated volley that has been hammering the coverts during the earlier portion of the day. Still unhit, the now terrified creature enters an adjoining field, cuts across, making as it probaby feels for some refuge beyond. But the great circle has begun to close in all round, other hares have been started across that fatal central field, and the sound of the guns is ever behind the first fugitive as it speeds ahead. Upon entering the outmost field, however, it sights the ring of men. From all sides at once comes the strange whinnying laughter of these

yokels whom, in its rigourously protected state, it has come to fear almost as little as the clods and cattle that are their analogues. It heads toward one side, but the whinny appals it; toward another, but the whinny still. Then it turns and makes its way back from this new terror to the old one that it has served for the time being to obliterate. So our noble platoon-firers have another chance of sending lead to market. Whether this first hare again successfully runs the gauntlet or not we never know; for all hares enclosed are now wild with fright, now one, now another appearing at different points beneath the hedgerow, at which the human whinny becomes more bestial and loud. Some turn back before the closing arc of men; but at last one fine old fellow charges straight ahead, eyes set and ears laid back, body and legs for the most of the time parallel to the ground as it shoots forward through, rather than over, the turf. '*Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!*' drones the derisive neigh of the flat-browed clowns as it approaches; coarse jests and shows of violence greet the frenzied creature in its wild dash for life. But never an inch does it alter its course. Beyond these howling devils and the strangely immobile dogs is a gap in the hedge. It sees nothing else; unless, indeed, some image fills the little throbbing brain to the exclusion of all else, as familiar scenes are said to rise in the minds of drowning men—some quiet refuge to be gained by a rush and a leap through the gaping hedge. Crouching almost into the soil as it cuts the cordon of men and dogs, it springs at the hedge, furs its flank on the thorn stump, but freeing itself, clears the lane, and so

through the hedge again down the hollow, as fine a brute as ever God made for man to maul.

In spite of the running fire—the field afterwards was strewn with cartridge cases like a battlefield—one after another of the fugitives gets through and away, some spent and bedraggled, others as if in a fixed frenzy of flight, and insensible to any new terror.

Last of all to break bounds was a strange creature that came whirling over the field in a steadily developed arc, as if blinded in one eye; but though fagged and limping, it passed unattacked through the now close cordon. For, notwithstanding all their howling and brandishing of staves, my lord's henchmen are imbued with a due reverence for the sacrificial character of the hare. They may grin like dogs and whinny like horses as it passes, but they may not touch it. Its person is sacred; its life is dedicate to my lord's double-barrel—when my lord has luck.

When the game cart comes along, we have the honour of observing that a score of hares and a dozen pheasants have fallen to five guns during a whole day's firing; not to mention some forty attendants whose company must at times have been embarassing. This sport is said to keep our race hardy, manly, soldierly. It may be so; but reflecting upon these and other matters, it seems to us that these men take their sport in a spirit of warfare, and we were therefore not surprised to observe that some of them appeared recently to take actual warfare in a spirit of sport. The former may be considered to be manly according to existing standards; the latter can be considered soldierly by no standard.

But to return to the game cart. The old fellow who led the horse showed us the "bag" with some pride. Here, prospectively, were jugged hare and roast pheasant, to be discussed decently at the family board. By our present code of Mutton-chop Ethics the edible nature of any living being, always excepting man, seems to justify its despatch, albeit not in such wise as we had seen. We can well imagine a time when our own ancesters regarded even a human steak with similar feelings. Morality has its times and places; and, being here and now, it seems to us that if killing is to be done at all, it should be with manly exercise of the higher attributes of sportsmanship—endurance, woodcraft, marksmanship, a fair giving of "law" as against a lust of slaughter, and above all, a sane judgement in all that concerns the preservation of faunal types. For man, with his shifting moralities, will pass, and higher standards of manliness and morality prevail; but howsoever these may excel those at this time existing, the virtues of to-morrow can never, in respect of lost types, retrieve the follies of to-day.

I should like to think that these or, indeed, any words would command a moment's attention from those responsible for the evil to which they refer. I know, however, that such a hope is futile. Game-preservers belong, as a rule, to a class to which Nature appears chiefly under the aspect of property; it is a poetical term applied generally by people not possessing land to the aggregate possessions of those who do. Only exceptionally is any of this class interested in the natural, as distinct from the commercial and social, element of an estate. It is not

their wish that the finer British birds should be shot in the interest of game birds. They are, as they would say, not at all interested in the finer British birds to wish them harm or otherwise. But, if they threaten the coverts, why, then the coverts must be protected. That seems quite final to them.

But "must?"—upon what compulsion must they? Here are we back again to our Mutton-chop Ethics. A bird that may be eaten must be protected from one that cannot be eaten; a bird that in the killing may afford facile sport to ourselves and our like, must not be suffered to be killed by one that would overtax our energy and skill, and probably fool us through half a county.

The great difficulty in discussing this matter is that there is no common ground on which one can approach such people. For, surrounded from birth by an artificial atmosphere, the landed and leisured classes are, for the most part, contented to exist. With a false standard of worth all but inverting the true and natural one, they feel that they have but to live up to that standard, no incentive to advance being present. They bore themselves and one another by idle flummeries which they denominate "society." But, if you throw Nature out of the window she will come back by the door; and with the advent of a Twelfth of August or a First of September, the better of them,—the better, I say,—jaded to death by the stupid round of conventionality, fling out and make their way to moor and covert with almost fanatical zeal. It is a return to Nature in a sense; to such Nature, at least, as minds oscillating between the savage and the sybarite can

picture. Here is cause indeed for pity, almost as much as for blame. They would probably be other than they are if they knew how; they do not know.

Under such circumstances one can well imagine with what desperate earnestness they would oppose any encroachment upon what they conceive to be their just prerogatives. To close this avenue of escape from the dull round of artificial existence would be, as it were, to divert the one free breath of life they know. Therefore, whatever betide, the game must be preserved; the "hawk," or be it what it will, must die.

It is now time to set up our warning. In the wide territory of Nature is a little island, unlovely under many aspects, but while millions of busy hands and heads toil in it, our own. Our own, to administer according to the instincts of our race, whether it be that few shall hold and many till, or that time and a broadening mind shall shape old things anew. But, whilst the few hold, let them hold as in trust. If they will preserve game, let them do so without offence; but let them also not offend against the Nation's trust. The British fauna is the property of the British folk, British as they are British, and by an older title. The pedigree of one member of it, could it be but traced, would cast more lustre upon its discoverer than all the pedigrees of so-called nobles since society began. Here in these rocks and trees, but much more in these things that fly and walk and swim and creep, is a history that thinking man is just beginning to decipher. It is *our* history, stretching back into farthest time. Yearly the preciousness of this record is revealed more and

more to our people. With widening knowledge, they wish to see, to examine, and know. The man who, knowing this, selfishly makes away with such living documents, is a criminal, and a coward to boot; for the consequences of his ill-deeds are brought home most to those who strive to prevent them. I cannot bespatter my page with the blood of our larger native mammals also, many of which are hunted out from their hidden retreats and destroyed in such increasing numbers as to point to their inevitable extirpation. But to those who, in the self-satisfied ignorance and selfishness of their kind, presume to slaughter what is ours, not theirs, a nation's, not a clique's, we raise our warning—"Trespassers will be Prosecuted"—a warning from those who make, and, if need be, unmake law.

IN PAIRING TIME.

The merely natural issue in human courtship is complicated with others less easy of adjustment; so that, however suddenly it may be entered upon, it is generally recognised as being fraught with more or less serious consequences, and is allowed to mature with some deliberation. To bind, and be bound, for the term of one's natural life, is felt to be no trivial undertaking in the present conditions of human society.

Therefore, whenever rivalry occurs, it has as a rule ample time to dull its edge ere the object of dispute passes irrevocably to one or other of the claimants.

Conceive, however, a state of society wherein each member should be called upon about the time of the vernal equinox suddenly to secure a partner for the impending season. The situation might be imagined as becoming more embarassing through the arrival upon these shores of crowds of interesting migrants of our own species—American, Australian, African cousins, all thronging to the hymeneal fair. House-room and movables being found ludicrously inadequate to the unexpected demand, their possessors, not wishing to be left high and dry in the civic ebb, abandon them, and join the houseless, unchattled host that betakes itself to the woods, the hedgesides,

holes in the earth and rocks, and other convenient retreats, there to live the life natural, supported by the fruits of the earth. All prudential considerations being thus sunk in the matrimonial turmoil, what contentions, what sudden rivalries would arise; with what desperate arts would men and women lay themselves out to captivate or capture the indispensable mate, so as not to fail of that brief period of idyllic happiness ere the moulting season—or, not to strain the analogy—the season of separation came round with the autumn?

Only by some such extravagant picture can one suggest to the minds of respectable, domesticated citizens, the wild spring carnival of bird-mating.

It is true there are among the sedentary species examples of staider habit, and permanent union has the sanction of some of the wisest heads of the corvine group; whilst, in the case of the Bullfinch—a bird of singularly amiable and even disposition—it would seem to result from a habit of affection, the young being known at times to continue with their parents even during the winter months.

Such union occurs, as stated, among sedentary species; and it is doubtful that it could survive the ordeal of migration. For, the migratory impulse is known to dissolve even the closer tie subsisting between the parent bird and its nestling. Nature seems at such times to drive out her children in designed confusion; and the winnowing fan of death plays continually over the migrating host. Each bird follows its own fate, supported only by the will to live, and the stimulating sight of those thousands of wings faring onward by the old way of wandering.

Of birds that come from farther north as immigrants to pass the winter with us, it is only possible to learn that, with the return of spring, some begin, even in this land of exile, to associate in pairs previous to their return to their northern nesting haunts. Field-fares, of which none remains here normally to breed, may be observed at that time sportively to chase and dip at one another in flight, displaying individual preferences in marked contrast with their impartial bearing toward one another during their winter sojourn with us. But, whether such birds are former associates, first-year birds never yet paired, or indeed old stagers seeking alliance with younger blood, it is not possible to ascertain.

Still I have in mind a certain stable-loft, accessible only through a small door purposely left open, to which a pair of migrant birds—House-martins—yearly return, and, whether in their winter exile they may have continued together, or have mingled indiscriminately with their fellows, I have little doubt that, saving death by the way, the birds that come thus to claim the old nesting-site, are those that nested there in the previous season; and that, finding themselves, after wandering, perhaps, by separate ways, again in the old surroundings, they feel the old charm, and renew the old alliance. I rest my argument upon the facts that this loft with its small entrance would in the ordinary way scarcely attract a bird to enter it at all; that the original birds, having once nested there, would upon returning to this country certainly repair thither, and that, failing their doing so, the chances of a distinct pair replacing them in so unusual a building-place would be

extremely remote; and finally that for three years one pair, and one only has nested there, against the same beam. One member of the pair might suffice to keep up the tenancy; but in that case it would probably accept a new mate only because the old one was dead.

However this may be, it abates little of the wild spirit of license and rivalry referred to as characteristic of the spring mating of birds.

As might be expected, some of the home birds (Stretford-on-the-Mersey, Lancs.) first set the pairing fashion in early spring. I think no bird gives signs of pairing earlier than the Hedge-sparrow. The plaintive, "peeping" note that seemed so fitly to accompany autumn decay and the dull, dead winter days, becomes less insistent as January progresses, and the breathlessly hurried song bubbles over whenever the rigour of the season abates even a little. Then about the middle of the month these birds may be seen flitting along the hedgesides in couples; and where they alight the male continues to hop from twig to twig about his prospective consort with an artless twitter and an excited shuddering of half-open wings. Occasionally the male bird flies out from the hedgetop, and as he circles round to a perching-place a little farther on, he utters, whilst still flying, snatches of his double-noted song, his mate following him in plainer fashion, no doubt duly impressed by this display of gratuitous flight, and by the unusual vision of her spouse-to-be singing in mid air without a supporting twig. Simpler courtship there could not well be, nor one more appropriate to that time of first stirrings

in the earth; for, at the foot of the hedgerow where they flit, spring has already set her sign-manual, the flat, round seal of the hedge-parsley that lies and waits and may not rise, and yet is tender and green and full of sap. Small beginnings, these—the Hedge-Sparrow and the hedge-parsley, but in their train follow all the singing and the wooing of the year, all the flowering and harvest of the earth.

The initial portion of the Missel-Thrush's courtship is conducted in the open. About the end of January the family parties of the previous year break up, and it is common at that time to see a couple of these birds in a wide field with all the breadth of it between them. Endless sympathetic tackings and posturings, nevertheless, show that they are in telepathic communication one with the other; still, half an hour may be required for the cock to pluck up courage and venture on the lady. If a rival is present, as is often the case, the process of courtship becomes more intelligible to the onlooker; for the scuffle that ensues has its human analogue. Failing the attendance of a rival, however, it is hard to follow the ripening of affection; for the birds continue to tack hither and thither, drawing themselves up at each halt as if to take the measure of an adversary rather than to con the comely points of a lover. As a rule, the end of it all is that the lady gathers herself up with strange haste seeing that she has been so long in making up her mind, and sets off on a long flight, her suitor following respectfully in her wake. From the first week of February, one cannot approach within a field's length of their retreat but the warning rattle is sounded. The cock is on

guard; the courtship (in what secret wise I have never yet found out) has been brought to a successful issue; housekeeping has begun; and very clever must he have been who has seen a straw carried for the building of the nest. No bird is more secret in this respect, or holds itself more aloof generally than the Missel-Thrush.

Very similar is the usual courtship in the Blackbirds, which also begins at the end of January. Their wooings seem fated to be of the three-cornered sort; and not seldom even three cocks may be seen laying siege to the same lady. She—a passive pivot, as it seems—provides a point about which they turn, until the inevitable scuffle rids her of the embarassment of making a personal choice.

More interesting than this almost mechanical betrothal was a case that came under my notice in the third week of March. I was passing beside a bramble-covered ditch—Blackbirds and Song-thrushes do most of their courting in ditches—when I heard a continuous prattle of small squeakings and pipings, and looked up to some ragged larches above for the polyglot Starling. Only he, I thought, could have spoken in such a grotesquely "monstrous little voice." But as I waited, I saw a cock Blackbird creep up the ditch bank in a most unusual manner. The long black tail, fanned to the full and depressed, trailed along the ground as the bird crawled slowly up with body low in the grass. The head, held forward on the stiffly extended neck, turned neither to the right nor to the left; and from the slightly opened bill came that continuous flow of small squealings and pipings as the bird dragged itself along.

This exhibition, being quite unlike any I had before witnessed in connection with the Blackbird, must have remained a mystery had not the bird, having reached the top of the bank, swung quickly round and continued his ghibberish until the brown form of a female Blackbird also appeared hopping up the ditch bank. When she had stopped short of the cock, bending forward, all eyes and ears, as it were, for his strange performing, a second female bird followed, and the two continued thus intently to regard the cock, and to disregard one another. When the cock bird, facing the two females, had serenaded them in this fashion for about a minute, he again turned tail upon them, fanning it and trailing it as before, and as he wormed along, they followed him silently, apparently fascinated by his wild skirling. He, stopping abruptly, and with his back still turned toward them, drew himself up, flung the spread tail askew on one side, and jerked his head awry on the other, as if he were stiffly set on a crooked wire. Where now was the shapely Blackbird with his elegant posings and poisings? The creature seemed so wrought up that he sought to throw himself rigidly into any extravagant posture. The stately Merle had become a fantastic contortionist.

When, later, one of the females espied me, she uttered the usual wild cackle, and the cock took wing into a neighbouring tree, whither he was followed by his admirers. Almost immediately, however, he set off on a long traverse, closely attended by the silent female. The other, following them, again cackled aloud as she passed me, upon which her companions

cut aside and forsook her. That cackle possibly cost her her chance in life. One does not care to have one's fine rapture rudely broken in upon by the practical cackle of even a well-meaning female.

I have described elsewhere ("Birds by Land and Sea") at some length the courtship of the Ring-ousel, and those who have witnessed the courtship of both this bird and the Blackbird will have noted the similarity of the subdued prattling used by both, a performance quite unlike the song of either.

I have found the courtship of the Song-thrush a strangely unimaginative affair. As a rule it is carried on in the early morning at the bottom of ditchways running beside hedgerows, and one may put up a string of half-a-dozen of these birds at once. No doubt they have, besides the mere striking of attitudes, certain masonic signs unintelligible to us; but, beyond struttings and posings, and a feeble show of pugnacity when two rivals rise together for a moment like bickering Starlings, I have found nothing of moment to record.

Observing the fine ecstasy with which a Throstle delivers himself in song, one might be disposed to credit him with something more distinctive than the perfunctory, forthright manner in which he takes a mate. But musical faculty in birds, as in men, is not necessarily allied with any mental or moral excellence; indeed, it seems often to preclude it. In no birds is the merely natural act of pairing so immediate and direct as among song-birds; whilst those that interpose displays and ceremonies, and are retarded by keen rivalries and contentions, are rarely birds of song, but such as the Crow, Snipe, and

Plover kinds, birds generally of marked character and intelligence. Therefore, the courtship of the Song-thrush is perhaps not strangely, but normally, unimaginative.

Before the end of a not too severe January Robins will be back in their old nesting places. Pairing in those spacious days seems to pass off more quietly than when, during March, the number of these birds is increased by the influx of strangers from without. It may be that, among the home birds, old associations are renewed in those quiet days undisturbed by the rout of new-comers who, later, bring greater contention with a wider choice.

In the third week of March I came upon no fewer than five Robins in a corner of a field—four cocks and one female, the latter standing demurely at the foot of the hedgerow with a Heaven-help-us expression in its attitude. Three of the cocks perched on twigs projecting from the hedge, and the fourth upon the top of an old gate stump, everyone of them with its tail erected at right angles to the axis of its body. The one upon the post, being free to move, hopped with stiffly set legs about the narrow area at command, before flitting to the ground to resume his antics immediately before the hen bird. But this was more than the others could stomach, so that, launching themselves upon him, they entered into a general scuffle, in which it was no longer possible to discriminate attacker from attacked. A moment later, all were up on the hedge, darting at and putting up one another, so that all retreated like a company of flitting tits along the hedge-top in what was at once a running pursuit and retreat. In the meanwhile

the hen, hopping through the hedge, escaped along the lane, leaving her would-be wooers to contend for a barren victory.

The Yellowhammer is another of our stay-at-homes that early separate into pairs. Although singing is seldom heard until the second week in February, already at the end of January the birds may be seen sitting and flitting together in couples, clinking out their short vibrant notes, or tripping one behind the other in their search for food at the foot of the hedgerow. But during February, bands of these birds move up from the south, and the still black hawthorn hedges are studded, as it were, with golden fruit. For at this time the birds are in brilliant plumage.

Then the scene becomes one of unusual animation considering the lethargic character of the Yellowhammer, one bird chasing another along and across the hedgerow with lightning speed, and with a flash of chestnut backs and a flicker of white-edged tails as they double and turn. Then the male, having settled near the object of his pursuit, will utter his strange song: "*N'Yan-n'yan-n'yan-n'yan-n'yan-n'yan-kee!*" and if he is a singer of finer quality, will add a third, thin, long note to the ordinary phrase, as though he were spent for breath and added this less usual note while replenishing his lungs. Thus the birds will continue to sit, uttering their simple notes, the one vibrant, the other like the tinkling drip of water, and fanning their tails incessantly to show the white. For white is ever your marriage colour with birds; and if a bird has white in his plumage he will not fail to show it during courtship.

Of the smaller birds that leave us for the winter, the Reed-bunting is often the last to go and the first to return. He is also one of the most domesticated, not to say uxorious birds I know. Reed-buntings move about, often in pairs, up to the end of October, and are back again, often in pairs and in full plumage, by the end of January. They appear to purchase a maximum of married life by a minimum of courtship. They arrive, as it would seem, with their minds already made up, feed together in the grass by the riverside, perch together on the hedgetop, and flit together along the reed and willow-grown ditches, although about three months must pass ere they be called upon to build. Nothing strikes an observer of the courtship of birds as more curious than this early consorting together in pairs of birds that are, as a rule, late nesters. In deficiency of courting antics the Reed-bunting is, I think, surpassed only by the Corn-bunting, and the latter has none at all. He may perch beside his mate, uttering occasionally his long, thin "*Tsi-u*," or his stuttering "*Trit-trit-trit-trititi*," and with his glossy black cap, white collar, and richly striped coat, he is certainly a fine fellow to look at. So that the lady, probably without any ambition to become a mother of heroes, may be well enough served. Her mate, however, has the virtues of his defects, and in due season will labour like any rook in bringing material for the construction of the nest.

The courtship of the Corn-bunting comes nigh being a contradiction in terms. There are no chasings, no antics, nothing but the strange, persistent song—if song it may be called—uttered by the hour as the

singer sits unmoving on the top of hedge or bush or tree. "Come and be married, an you will," it seems to say in the first or second week of January; "but at your leisure; we do not nest till May; and May is far away, is very far away." And then he sits, stone-still, looking out over the flat grass fields and crooked river, as he will sit and look and sing until November, if he cease even then. In due time he gets paired, and the brood is reared; for Corn-buntings thrive in our Mersey flats. It is to be hoped that his good-lady has joy of his singing, for she has small profit by his activities. Yet, in his song he is active beyond measure—a steady, grinding, all but year-long activity, doled out regularly and deliberately in portions all of the same kind and volume. There is no song like that song. You may stand by the hour trying to fix it by similes, but it will elude you. Hudson cites Robert Gray as writing:—"It puts you in mind of a jingling chain or the sound of broken glass." That is excellent. Hudson himself has likened it to a "note broken up into splinters, or issuing out of a bundle of minute wind-pipes." That, too, is admirable. And yet, the closer the simile is driven, the more evident it becomes that there is an outstanding something that it fails to cover. However that may be, lying one brilliant summer day by the river, and hearing song answer song across the surrounding meadows, there flashed through my mind the memory of "the brittle fleet" that on the reef of gold

> "Touch'd, clink'd, and clash'd, and vanish'd . . "

and I seemed satisfied. Returning home, I took down

my Tennyson and, turning to "Sea Dreams," read:—

> "She pointed seaward: there a fleet of glass,
> That seemed a fleet of jewels under me,
> Sailing along . . . . . past
> In sunshine: right across its track there lay,
> Down in the water, a long reef of gold . . .
> . . . . . and then I feared
> Lest the gay navy there should splinter on it,
> And fearing waved my arm to warn them off;
> An idle signal, for the brittle fleet
> . . . . . neared,
> Touch'd, clink'd, and clash'd, and vanish'd . . ."

Examining myself as to the reason of my satisfaction, I found that in the ampler, less definite setting of such a picture, I might lose the sense of that deficiency which arose from the application of more narrowly defined likenesses to the singing of the Corn-bunting. And now, whenever I hear that strangely indescribable song, I seem to look out upon a sunlit sea; and that glittering fleet of glass—a toy of the distance—comes up, and gliding on—bright fabric of poesy, all but spirit-light—goes to its doom, touches, clinks, clashes and vanishes; and the far echo of its tinkling destruction is no more than a note in a song-bird's throat.

Although winter bands of Chaffinches remain with us until overtaken by other bands that move up to us usually in the first week in March, couples of these birds—male and female—may be seen in the opening days of February, keeping company in the manner of pairs. Singing begins with the arrival of the early-March migrants, and the impetuous nature of the Chaffinch is at once made evident by its impatient rivalry in song. Contrast with this the

contemporaneous and equally keen contests of the Redbreasts. Your Robin is a bold rapiersman, but a courtier to boot. He will not muddle issues with his opponent. One bird never interrupts another in song. He delivers his fine glancing stroke of melody, then stands to receive the full counterstroke of his antagonist. He will have clear hitting on both sides, and no vulgar rattling of steel. But your Chaffinch is a swashbuckler; he smites with smashing fury, all but thrusting and parrying at once. Barely have the first two notes of the song of a Chaffinch sounded when his opponent crashes in upon it with his own; so that, for two songs, there is a double song, and none, ending in the successive "*It-schiu!*" of each, like a double sneeze from both. Yet is he a fine fellow, this Chaffinch—a gay cavalier, with his ruddy doublet and varicoloured cape slashed on the sleeves with white. But fine clothes and a lordly air make an unimaginative wooing; it is only your squat Snipe, with his round shoulders and meditative bill, that must get him up into the highest, and find for himself the soul of an artist in the sky. And so the courting of the Chaffinch is not a very significant affair. Generally it takes place upon the ground, often on a road, both birds maintaining a ceaseless twittering, and the male bird flying repeatedly a few feet ahead, to be followed by the female, eager to entrust her affections to so well dressed a gentleman. Still, I am bound to state that, being married, Chaffinches make the best of parents, the cock being as attentive to the young ones as a mother, and the mother herself foraging with the energy of a cock.

Our rookery this year (1905) comprises over one hundred and fifty nests. The birds are present there every day throughout the year. About the first week in March they settle permanently to reside and sleep in the rookery, during the remainder of the year visiting it occasionally during the day, but retiring at sundown to sleep elsewhere. At all times throughout the year they feed in the fields surrounding the rookery.

Early in February, and therefore about a month before they return to take up summer residence with us, some of the birds separate out into pairs and feed together in the fields. These, I take it, are mates of old standing; for this pairing, or re-pairing, takes place with less dispute than later attends first-pairing among the younger birds. Some of the latter, however, appear at times to desire to make overtures to their grandmothers, and have to be made to understand that this is against rook-law, at any rate during the lifetime of their grandsires. Although, by re-pairing, the old birds are saved some of the labour of contest, the ardours and antics of first-love are always renewed. Long ere the young birds have learned to make a courtesy, their seniors are bowing to one another, beak to ground and tail in air; or the cock, with drooping wings and spread, depressed tail, is strutting before his lady as in the pride of his youth. Hence when the birds return to the rookery for the summer, old birds have a considerable start of the younger generation, having often but to overhaul the old nests, and go straight ahead with conjugal duties.

Our rookery is in the form of a Greek Pi. The

sides of it formed the principal nesting lines for many years, but the head-piece having now also been largely occupied, one pair have built their nest in a small birch tree in a neighbouring villa garden. At the angles of the Pi are two immense nests—ancestral structures, as I take it—and whilst these are being overhauled, large numbers of the birds sit around them, as if these nests were objects of general interest, and all expected to share them when completed.

Sticks are first carried during the last week of February, but nest-building in the colony is not over until toward the end of April. A few birds begin to sit during the third week in March, and incubation is still proceeding in the rookery toward the end of May. During this time the cock bird has to redeem his matrimonial pledges. Stick-breaking and the fighting-off of pushful young birds, marauders, and certain solitaries that seem as yet to have no settled status in the colony,at first keep him fully employed. Afterwards, he must away down into the fields to get food for his nest-ridden partner. You may see him return with bulging throat; and the hen, who can distinguish him from any other rook when still a considerable distance from the nest, immediately upon sighting him, springs on to a bough, and caws frantically as he approaches. Alighting, he gives up his mouthful of delicacies to his partner, who refrains from shrieking only when engaged in extracting the food from his bill and swallowing it. It is obviously but a platitude to say that, but for this sacrifice on the part of the male, the female bird would be unable to discharge her maternal duties; but, if one reflects how absorbing is the search for food in birds

of the Crow kind, and how almost unlimited their appetites, it is hard to understand how the male bird should have come to collect food in its own mouth, without even the incentive of the presence of the female bird whilst doing so, and then to bear it to the distant rookery on watering tongue, and give it up entirely. That it is at times a duty hard of performance can be readily observed by any who will watch; and the importunate cries of the female bird are due not only to her desire for the food, but to the recognition that continual moral pressure has to be brought to bear in order to overcome the strong natural desire in the male to retain it; for, sometimes, when solicited, he opens his bill narrowly and with reluctance, and having yielded up a portion of the food, wipes his bill on the bough with the air of one laying aside his napkin; but the female is accustomed to this little subterfuge, and her vociferous stormings cause him to give up a further portion of the food he has brought. Again the wiping of the bill, and the demand of the female for the last morsel. In the end, having given up all, he sits there for a few moments, silent, miserably righteous, the possesser of a sort of negative conscience able to make him uncomfortable by forbidding the natural satisfaction of his own appetite, but witholding the moral satisfaction that comes of conscious self-denial.

Not the worst of Rook-husbands is he who gives up even reluctantly the food he has brought. On the 12th April, 1905, there came under my notice an instance of a male rook refusing to go for food at all. The pair had their nest: whether or not they had in

it anything that should call for the continued presence of the female bird at the nest, I am unable to say. However that may be, she was perching shoulder to shoulder with the male upon a bough beside the nest, shaking her wings and crying in the unmistakable tones of the female Rook when asking for food. But the male sat obdurate, with beak sullenly set, and without yielding so far as even to avert his head when she bawled in his face. After spending several minutes in appeals so excited that I thought they must end in blows, the female flung herself off, heading toward the feeding fields, the delinquent husband slipping into her wake. As she went she continued to utter the characteristic cry for food, which differs from the ordinary one. Although building was still in progress in some parts of the rookery, most of the birds had finished, and many were sitting. Under these circumstances, "rooking" of a neighbour's sticks is much rarer than during the earlier stages of construction; and it may be that the male Rook, regarding it as no longer necessary that the female should stay or guard on this account, refused to start married life straight off with an invalided partner. For I can scarcely believe that he would have acted so had there been eggs in the nest. There is nothing easier than to read human motives into the actions of birds; and there is also nothing more certain with those intimate with the conversation of birds among themselves than that they are guided by recognised rules of conduct that are true "*mores*," the infraction of which brings with it—for the time being, at any rate—compunctious visitings similiar to those

of the human conscience. Whether or not birds know anything of the satisfaction that comes of good done is a question infinitely harder to answer.

Even at the end of March, when the domestic arrangements of the old birds are far advanced, some of the young birds are still unpaired. Endless chasings are going on, an unattached female leading, and three or four males following closely at her tail. Round and round the rookery they go in strong, strenuous flight, until at last they alight, the males contending for a near place beside the female bird. He that flies longest and strongest, and beats off his rivals most valiantly, will have the satisfaction of bowing to his lady in the fields below. But let him keep a sharp eye on the disappointed ones; for I have known one such swoop, and passing in low, skimming flight, drive his bill against the nape of his successful rival, and knock him sprawling before his lady-love. This same kind of "pairing-flight" is practised by Starlings, as I have elsewhere described in detail.

Meadow-pipits and Wagtails make themselves conspicuous at pairing-time by wildly chasing one another, so that they may commonly be seen dashing along in couples, separated by only a few inches, developing by uninterrupted wing-action a flight quite unlike their usual hesitating motions in the air, and a speed and agility in doubling and coasting seldom exhibited at other times.

Pairing-time appears to bring out in Meadow-pipits and Wagtails also a latent habit of perching in trees and bushes, a peculiarity, however, that I have not noticed in the White or Grey Wagtails.

Meadow-pipits indulge it most frequently, and from early February onwards may be seen resorting to even lofty trees. When perching, Pied and Yellow Wagtails frequent as a rule hedge-tops and the lower branches of trees, though both species will at times perch high. This is curiously exceptional conduct, seeing how closely these birds keep the ground at other times, being indeed birds that nest and feed exclusively upon the ground. I have only once observed Pied Wagtails using such a situation for purposes of display, and this was limited to certain bowing antics by the male as he passed from twig to twig around the female. This perching habit being indulged frequently in the pairing season, I looked to find it connected in some way with pairing. This is not so ; nor do these birds feed when perching. I recall occasions when, about the middle of September, I have seen Yellow Wagtails collected in parties of from a dozen to a score in the tops of high trees, by their excited flutterings and short flights exhibiting some of the accompaniments of swarming in birds about to migrate. This perching in trees by Meadow-pipits, Pied and Yellow Wagtails about the pairing time may therefore be incidental to their spring migration, and quite unconnected with pairing, coinciding with the time of pairing only because the latter and the time of the spring passage are themselves coincident.

The Wagtails, like most of the smaller birds of bright plumage, are deficient in courting antics. Beyond strutting hither and thither before the female, using a low, prattling note as he does so, the male Wagtail appears to have no distinctive ceremonies

by which to commend himself. But the Meadow-pipit, like most birds of a more or less dull and ordinary exterior, has had to evolve something strange or beautiful from within, and every spring it has to be refurbished and gradually brought to perfection. He is an explosive morsel in the early days of February. Until then he was content to flit about in low flight with a peeping note; but as February opens, he starts up ever and anon with sudden outcry, and goes careering round on high with a jerky, dancing flight, tweeting vociferously as he flies. It is mid-March, however, before he begins thoroughly to unlock himself, and makes his first attempt to sing. During the third week of March the infection spreads and many short songs are heard; but the singers are for the most part tuning up upon the ground, not yet abandoning themselves in their distinctive song-flight. But ere March closes many of the birds have fully recovered their powers, and from the grassy embankments of the river and the meadows through which it flows, all day long they rise with metallic, vibrant notes. Having reached the culminating point of song and flight alike, effort ceases, and the luxury of descent begins. Abandoning itself to the pull of gravitation, all but counteracted by the outspread wings and extended tail, the bird sinks, breasting the air, with a langourous, gliding motion. There are two quite different songs used during descent. At one time it is but a repetition of the note used in ascending, but much accelerated. At other times the bird utters as it falls a delicious trilling, subdued, intimate to the point of extinction; for, midway in the descent, the song, as if cloyed

with its own sweetness, is overcome by momentary silence. Then the bird, recovering command, swerves on a descending arc, and with freer, incisive notes, comes to rest upon the ground. I have seen this little artist so abandon himself to his art as to strike the water in the middle of the river in his unchecked descent, escaping only by very inartistic flutterings to the bank where his mate awaited him, a wetter and, it is to be hoped, a wiser bird.

The Greenfinch is a bird one would not readily credit with originality even when stimulated by rivalry in love. Its long-drawn note first sounds in our neighbourhood about the second week of March, but no considerable number of the birds appears until early April. At that time the males gather on the hedgetops in the neighbourhood of the as yet not very numerous females, constantly twittering, and at times evincing a mildly bellicose spirit by darting at and displacing some nearer rival.

The Greenfinch has, nevertheless, a quite original performance when he flies out to circle about and display his qualities before the female seated on the hedgetop. The mode of flight used then—and at no other time—is distinguished by a peculiar rolling motion, and it will cost the observer some pains to discover how it is set up. It is not that kind of rolling motion that is caused—as in the case of the Lapwing—by the bird tilting itself bodily to right and left alternately, so as to display now the upper, now the under parts to an observer stationed on one side. The Greenfinch flies with wings extended horizontally, and the rolling movement resembles to some extent that of a swimmer swimming "overhand," employing

the right and the left arm alternately. In this rolling of the Greenfinch, however, the motion is much less pronounced than in such a swimmer; for whilst the strokes of the swimmer are separate and successive, the wing-strokes of the Greenfinch are not distinct and to a large extent overlap. It is just this failure to cause the wing-strokes to synchronize precisely that sets up the continuous rolling. The rolling flight is necessarily slower than the plain flight, and the bird suits to it a distinctive twanging song also slower than that employed in more prosaic moments.

Ring-doves have a somewhat similar display. The bird that struts so passionately about the apparently indifferent female with sweeping tail and breast puffed out, ducking as if to head her off at every point—this strong-winged wooer may be seen, when approaching the nesting tree, to falter and sink with apparently unavailing efforts to gain his perch, as if one should perform all the motions of running yet make no progress.

About the first week of March begins the wild breeding cry of the Lapwing: "*Co-u-whee! whee-whee! co-u-whee!*" so different from the peevish "*Pee!*" or "*Pee-wit!*" of the winter bird. A week or two later the male will be at his antics. At times he is content to strut with tail elevated, displaying the now full-coloured fawny under-coverts. Then, up-ending, as it is called, that is, setting his breast to the ground and holding his tail aloft, he continues to rock his tail with an up-and-down motion. As he does this he emits a regularly repeated sound, vocal so far as I can ascertain, but resembling the creaking sound to be made by doubling a thick, new leather

strap. It reminds one also of that creaking sound—not the humming one—made by the Lapwing as it dashes by in executing its well-known excited flight in the pairing season. Still breast to the ground, the bird elaborates the antic by half-opening its wings, depressing the tail feathers and, throwing them out of tension, rustles them loosely in the air. Having finished his antics on the ground he transfers himself to the air. "*Co-u-whee! whee-whee! co-u-whee!*" he cries, dashing along-field with creak and hum, the wings tilted alternately to right and left in his rolling flight. Suddenly, as if arrested by the advance of some great billow of air, he sweeps up sharply to its crest; then, wavering a moment, topples headlong into the trough beyond. If he can lure his soberer mate up into the air he will lay aside his roughness and, flapping over and about her, touch wings, and cry his glad wild cry.

It would be easy to extend this account by the inclusion of descriptions of such love-antics as those of the Ruff, Great Bustard, &c., which probably have been witnessed by fewer persons than have attempted their description; but the object of this chapter is to furnish first-hand accounts of observations of some of the birds easily to be encountered by those whose interest in the subject is not necessarily limited by the fewness of their opportunities for observation, but whose opportunities are rare enough to make them desire to use them for some practicable purpose.

One such bird, sufficiently irrepressible in the pairing season to catch the eye of even the casual observer, is the Common Snipe. In his antics he is

not particularly extravagant considered as a feather contortionist, but there is at that time no bird more overflowing with the wild joy of life, or who lays under contribution a larger space of heaven and earth wherein to express it.

Once I bought a book issued with an attractive title, and written by a man who filled a large portion of the title page with a list of his distinctions, academical and others, and a large portion of his book with reproductions of photographs of the wild life that haunts the show-cases of our museums. I was pained and disgusted to find every bird that could be eaten, as well as some that I should have imagined could not, therein treated of insistently from the culinary standpoint, and with an animal gusto for which the author appeared to have received no academical recognition. He fraternises with the Song-thrush as being, like himself, an eater of snails. He detests the Blackbird so much that he could wish a certain peasant's taste for Blackbird pie were a common one; perhaps it is. A fig, he says, is the Garden-warbler's "grand passion." He notes with rejoicing that the farmer uses the young of the Greenfinch to fill his "ferret's long, lean stomach." He commiserates the sentimentalist who raises an outcry against the caging of birds. The breasts of young Sparrows stewed are "good enough," he avers; "the bird is also useful for trap-shooting and the feeding of ferrets." The Chaffinch, "a living chromo-lithograph," he consigns to Germany and destruction. The Brambling he states to be "careful of his useless carcase." Among Linnets "your sweetest pet is the young nestling reft

from home before he begins to 'take notice.'" He finds the Skylark "in the azure carroling or on toast, equally delightful—a dish too good for any born *(sic)* sentimentalist, and fit only for a sensible naturalist." "A fen-bred flapper is the juiciest and sweetest of table birds. The Pintail is a capital table bird." He prefers Widgeon to Teal or Mallard, "unless it be a flapper stuffed with potato and celery, etc." Doves are "good eating." The Water-rail is "a splendid fellow in a dumpling or curried." Water-hen is "sabroso." He has curried Coots. Ringed-plover tastes nearly as sweet as Snipe. Golden Plover reappear in October, "on toast amid the chrysanthemums." A Peewit is "most desirable upon the soft-lighted dinner table." The Jack-snipe is "a splendid little fellow on toast."

"And so farewell," he cries, in concluding that portion of his book that treats of birds, and feeling that he is about to place a great restraint upon his appetite in approaching the section devoted to Bats, Polecats, and the like—"And so farewell, my grotesque birds, dedicated to the *chef-de-cuisine*—fare you well, with your monstrous love songs, strange guzzling habits, amusing skulking flights. You, too, have your poetry, after twenty miuntes in a hot oven—on toast; and may you yearly bring forth your beautiful little fledgelings, and lead them safely down to the bright water-side for aye—this baptismal pilgrimage being but the forerunner of the great sacrificial feast that awaits them on the table of all who are artists enough to know a Snipe from a Hernshaw. Increase and multiply, ye grotesque ones—and may the *chef* be with you."

In treating of the reputation of the Woodcock as a table bird, this writer states that "the world is full of over-estimated birds as well as false reputations; but the truth is great—it will prevail." Probably it will; but not "on toast." In the meanwhile, what has truth done that he should defend her?

In this glorified *menu*, illuminated, as it is, by florid picturings of the beauties of Nature, the Snipe could not fail to have a place. "These grotesque birds," the writer says, "all belly and bill, were born for the table—a long bill to feed a dumpy, graceless body, which, however, is as sweet as a nut, and more juicy." Then follows a long rhapsodical paragraph about the "silver moon" and similar phenomena, with a hungry nominative gaping for its verb from start to finish, and forced in the end to swallow a full-stop for lack of more natural diet.

But to return from this little excursion into the natural history of natural history, by what canon is the Snipe styled graceless and grotesque? Shall we call the Heron grotesque in respect to the Hobby? the Coot graceless as compared with the Swallow? These are general terms presupposing some general standard of excellence from which each deviates in its way. But what ideal bird has become the standard of comparison for forms so widely different? Place the Swallow beside the Coot in the water, and say which is graceful; or the Coot beside the Swallow in the air, and say which is grotesque. Each is fitted for its element, we say. Just so; each has its own standard. I am not able to think of a Snipe in terms of a Wagtail. That would indeed be grotesque. But, taking a Snipe for what it is, one need not be a

Spinozist to find in it a full and free expression of that Prime Substance which has in it the form and fashioning of all life; though there are more Peter Blynings in Nature than some of us wot of. To me a Snipe, even on the ground, is a beautiful creature—in its rounded, compact form; its attentive, almost contemplative posings; its long, specialized bill; its bold and exquisitely variegated markings; its free gait and sagacious eye. I cannot conceive it as being other, much less better than it is.

But, let the bird rise if you will take the measure of the Culinary Critic's judgement upon its gracelessness and grotesqueness. Springing up from the marsh ground where he feeds, he mounts rapidly aloft until, at a commanding height, he sets himself to beat round in a great circle in strong swift flight. At intervals during this circling flight he swerves aside tangentially, but on a slightly descending, outward-curving tangent. The words "inclined plane" having been used by one writer to indicate the direction of this subordinate movement, have become almost sacrosanct by unobservant repetition. The distinction is, perhaps, not worth labouring; but it is worth observing. During this tangential flight the so-called humming of the Snipe is heard. Whilst it is being produced, the feathers of the tail are always opened out and fixed, and the wings are set quivering in a manner never observed unless attended by the humming. By some it is held still to be a matter for debate whether the humming is vocally produced or is due to the quivering action of the wings, or, again, to the passage of air through the rigidly set tail-feathers.

But, when it is remembered that the quivering of the wings synchronises precisely in its inception, duration, and cessation, with the humming sound, it would be more than strange if this close coincidence should be without causal connection. The hum—itself a quivering hum—runs in perfect parallelism, so to say, with the quivering of the wings. The bill continues closed during its production.

This flight and humming, when practised in the opening spring, are held to be a means of attracting the female bird; and later, when the latter is sitting, her situation on the ground becomes the sunken centre, as it were, of the great circle around which the male continues to travel above and about her.

It may be that some of us are not "sensible naturalists"—sensible, that is, to the superlative succulence of Snipe on toast, with or without the chrysanthemums and shaded lamp; it may be that, in watching this wild thing of the air careering round on high, we have caught something of the ardour that impels him, setting earth and sky spinning in a counter-flight; it may be that the sight of such wide freedom unlocks for a while the spirit of a man, giving it wings, and air, and a heaven to move in. And if, hearing that mock-mournful monotone, that something between laughter and a moan, he still can follow, and make it part of him and of his mood,—why, then is he complete.

For he who follows Nature will find his way crossed by that he did not seek. "*Fera*" she was, and will remain—claw in pad, thorn by the rose, mixing bitter with sweet. By none will she be seen with unaverted face; and he who would hear the

pipes of Pan must suffer the clatter of his hoofs. For, in the last resort, in all things natural there would seem to be some strange inconsequence, some reason that is unreason to our thoughts—songs of anger, moans for joy, beauty that grins and loves that hate, life that dies and death that lives. Or, it may be, these seeming inversions are but the figments of sophisticated minds, which, having travelled far from the first strong simplicity of Nature, turn back to impose upon it their own misty modes of thought. She brings to life, she brings to death, with the grand indifference of one to whom both are but parts of some simpler, indestructible Whole; some One Last Thing, in which is Life, going out from it and returning to it again. To none—not even to those who medicine body and soul of man, is it given to face so closely this "spirit of negation" as to him who lives the life of the open. On every hand is contradiction until, cutting down through the shows of things, he refunds mentality and morality alike into that which, being before either, contained and conditioned both—Life, the First, the Unmodified.

I shall not soon forget the occasion when a certain face of Bouguereau's first caught my eye. It was in the "Naissance de Vénus." The goddess, born of the foam, stands on her shell, sea-borne. About her swart mermen and fair-skinned mermaids with human smiles disport themselves, whilst little children, mounted on dolphins, guide them through the waves with silken reins. The softening influence of the goddess is upon them all; they are humanised; we recognise ourselves in them. But, on the right of

the goddess is a shag-headed, dark-browed creature, half-risen from the sea. He is alone; he seeks no mate. No softening charm smooths out the rugged brows, or lightens the gloom of his deep-set eyes as, with face upturned and swelling cheeks, he trumpets fiercely on his conch to this vision of strange, and as yet unrealised, loveliness. One recognises in him at a glance the aspect of Nature unreclaimed. He was, and was thus, ere Aphrodite rose. Now he seems fierce and froward; but before there had been neither fierceness nor frowardness. So each new influence brings with it further alienation, and the Nature that was, becomes an increasing mystery to the Nature that is.

When the Snipe dips, and sends his melancholy laughter along the sky, I see again that fierce-browed merman with his conch, and I seem to hear some ancient cry filled with the wild indifference of a time ere laughter or melancholy came into the earth.

BENEDICITE.

I wonder what any fairly orthodox suburban worshipper would do if, at dawn of a Sabbath morning late in April, the four o'clock sun, perceiving a bedroom window left wide open to the east, should look in upon him with mildly secular ray. For, the sun, be it noted, before the stroke of church-going bell, is frankly a heathen. Sunday it may be, but he comes in no studied garb; the day of rest, but he makes not of this a pretext for sloth.

If this imaginary earliest worshipper is drawn to put his tousled head through the window, he will probably find an ungodly rout of Sparrows in the ivy, and Starlings from the silent church-tower flinging crackling profanities broadcast on the morning air. And if, beneath the finer influences of the hour, sight and hearing recover for a time something of that old keenness that now, like an all but obsolete faculty, resides in the senses of children only, he may catch the beat of the feet of the "little people" on the grass, and know who it is that, swaying in the shadow and shine of the poplar, makes the leaves clatter so widely in so light a breeze.

For the hordes of heathenesse are abroad. It is the last rally before day of the "little folk," man's intimates ere he became estranged from himself. For

"In olde dayes . . . . .
All was this lond fulfilled of faerie;
The Elf-Queene with hire jolie company
Daunsed full oft in many a grene mede . . .
But now can no man see non elves mo.
For now the grete charite and prayers
Of limitours and other holy freres . . .
This maketh that there ben no faeries.
For there as wont to walken was an elf,
There walketh now the limitour himself . . .
In every bush, and under every tree,
There is none other incubus but he."

They lead their revelry with childish boldness into the holy precincts of church and churchyard; they clamber about the sacred edifice to peep through keyholes and to peer through richly obscure windows into the lonely mystery within. What should it be—the great, quiet House where no man lives; with the lofty tower wherein no man keeps watch? About it, as if moored to some old rock, lie the light skiffs of those who have made their last port. The dead, the little people know; for there were always dead. Time, too, they know, and the grinding of the wheels in the clock-tower affrights them not; there was always Time. But the sudden clangour of the bells is a thing of dread; their iron tongues are tongues of terror. They are as a voice from the void, a menace in a tongue to them unknown, unlearnable. Time was men took their days in peace, and questioned not of the morrow. The bright things of earth were good to them—the height of the hill, the breadth of the plain, the river winding in the plain. There was fellowship between them when as yet he had not sought the height

above height, the plain beyond the plain, the stream's source hidden in the earth. Thereafter man went by a way in which the little folk might not follow, and all they know of it is that the bells are the sign and symbol of his going.

I have no doubt as to the "morality" governing those early hours of a Sunday morning—those hours, I would say, between sunrise and the first stroke from the belfry. The parson is asleep; his congregation, scattered recumbent all about the parish, are consciously no nearer to the Sabbath then dawning than they are to the Sabbath next to follow. Being as yet unattired themselves, they tacitly concede that a man may without grave misdemeanour sally forth in any clothing of a discreetly neutral character. They do not sally forth themselves, for it is lawful to rest—elastic word!—on the Sabbath; still, such a proceeding is conceded to be tolerable, even mildly commendable, in one probably a little odd in the manner of his goings-out and comings-in. It is worthy of note, therefore, by such as share with Nature the eccentric habit of early-rising, that one may walk abroad in God's earth of a Sabbath morning early without grave scandal among the faithful.

I would, however, beseech my co-eccentrics to note that word "early." The period of license it covers expires at the first stroke of the church-going bell. To be "perfect" in the law, one should be able at that critical moment to slough an old Norfolk and emerge in black; an umbrella may fitly supersede the profane ash stock; a cap of homespun should give place to the polished cylinder whose sole merit

is that it cost no seal its life; the hands—but a truce to this bill of parcels.

Wherefore, if any will be of good report among his fellows, let him hie back to his own house, and having arrayed himself as may seem fit, go praise his Maker in the congregation.

But there must always be some for whom the older voices cease not to call in the earth; in whom the old Adam will be stirring while sun shines and winds blow. Need there because of this be bitterness between the many and the few? I trust not. Let the many decide. Time was the heathen was but he who lived on the "heath," in the wild; and by extension, a dweller in the Gentile waste. Nature, as comprising that waste, and therefore unreclaimed, came under the ban of the bigot. But the ban is passing with the bigot who framed it. For clearer eyes have sought out that upon which the bigot looked askance; and out of the wilderness is come a new gospel, the gospel of the fellowship of all Being, the Scripture of the rocks, the Evangel of the Upward Way.

But if any, for the sake of old days and ways, and being averse from that spirit of aloofness that comes perhaps of overmuch pondering, should need to justify to himself a truant impulse, why, I am with him, even more than with myself. I would have him come on such an April morning when the day is but begun; when the light of the sun, the rarer air, the sight and scent of blossoming tree and flower, the sounds of jubilant bird-song assail all doors of sense at once, until, as from some inner spiritual generator, the full current of life strikes along the nerves, and a man breaks out into

laughter with his whole body and soul. I would lead him, ere the village wakes, beyond the challenge of the tardy bell, in a way that winds by lane and fieldpath, copse and cover, with here a stream and there a reed-grown mere—out into the open, where life is, and the breath of life. And lest conscience should prick him for his new waywardness—a waywardness that should, in truth, itself form part of conscience—I would tell him of a little square-towered church distant twelve blessed miles across the fields, but set high on a hill above a quiet mere; a little beacon radiating peace for light—a little beacon by a little sea.

Then all the bells of Christendom may sound; we defy them. They are not our bell. We owe them no allegiance. We are pilgrims to a distant shrine; we shall solve our obligation at the journey's end.

I would not burden the rigidly righteous with such a pilgrimage. For such a pilgrim is become heathen and fanatic at once. He will break the Sabbath with the most devout exaltation of spirit. He is a vagabond who shuns his fellows in the mass, to thank God for every particular son of Adam he chances upon in his ramblings. Avoiding the authoritative call of his own conventicle, he delights in the tinkling summons of the hamlet churches scattered in the country around—grey old bell-wethers, leading their flocks, any one of which he may, but none of which he is bound to follow.

But, whence this strange contradiction? Good deeds themselves pall by monotony of practice. Monotony begets perfunctoriness, perfunctoriness insincerity; and when insincerity is come, the soul is

gone out of goodness. How comes it that men who in the sanctuary laud the Maker for his wondrous works, hold them so lightly under other surroundings that they care not even to know what manner of works they are? There is something dead in every habit, it is a ghost of past endeavour, an unconscious summation of efforts individually defunct. Seal up the church doors for a year, throw men back upon themselves, disturb the confidence of custom, break their habits to restore their wills, for what a man himself wills to be and do is all that matters in this or any other world.

I did not think those serious things out there in the sunshine. I never think in the sun if I can help it. But there goes with me continually another of doubtful personality; a respectable, fossilized being who, truth to tell, is somewhat ashamed of my company. He will have it that it is no small honour to have been born the son of your own father; that clothes have their uses even in summer; that man of woman born requires at least two meals a day; and that the action of the sun's rays upon the skin, and the exercise of walking, contribute toward general bodily health. He has his own conception of the cosmos, and is given to snuffing among first principles and similar vanities. He has even some pretension to be a human being; and when dragged through a bramble thicket, led into a quake-bog, or urged along his twenty-fourth mile upon the memory of an early breakfast, has hinted not obscurely that he is I, or that I am he, or that both of us together constitute some mysterious *tertium quid*. As I tell this gentleman, we had better retain our separate

individualities, and agree mutually to tolerate one another. In some future state we may meet again and merge; but in this present state of man, each can serve the other only as a foil.

I essay at times to give this worthy personage the slip, a difficult task for one who shares with him the same pair of feet.

Thus, on that aforementioned Sabbath morning in April, I got clear away from our village on to the high-road, upon which is strung a succession of villages and country towns from Stretford on the Mersey as far as Chester on the Dee. I like country roads in the early day. It is with a spacious sense of freedom and proprietorship that one stalks along the empty highway, and no part of it affects me more pleasantly than that where I step from one county into another. Two counties and a man—there is a fine roominess in the picture. I had got clear away, as I stated, without any untoward demonstration on the part of the respectable Ruminant who for my sins is set to shadow me. He, with his predilection for beaten tracks of all sorts, gave no sign of his presence so long as we tramped ahead on the King's high-road. He is, indeed, a comfortable soul where he has a right of way and the law on his side; and when, later in the day, the hooting, grunting motors, manned by goggle-eyed fiends, began to sweep past, whirling aloft clouds of man-choking, tree-stifling dust on the petrol-laden air, he notified his presence by remarking that, as pedestrians, we had full legal right to the use of the footway whenever visible, were the cars, indeed, fifty times as numerous, and the dust sixty times as thick.

By which it appears that a law-abiding citizen need abate no jot of his civic privileges.

Thereafter we continued together, he in the swirling dust-clouds gasping something about judgment overtaking those who strayed from the clear path of duty, I seeking an escape from the consequences of a playful statute by which a car-fiend is forbidden under pain of fine to pelt dirt at a pedestrian with a velocity exceeding twenty miles an hour. I hope I am as good a patriot as most of my countrymen; but, even so, I have no desire to *eat* my native land. This is a sample of what may be called trespass of the land upon the person, a form of trespass the law, with its usual acumen, distinguishes favourably from trespass by the person on the land.

Striking the river Bollin, we turned aside over the stile, and left the snorting Juggernauts of the high-road behind.

In passing over some rolling grass land diversified by clumps of fresh-leafed covert, we came upon a scene of conflict. Two birds had been conspicuously in evidence as we wound along the Bollin valley—the Lapwing of the open, and the Pheasant of the coverts. The former had eggs or young out all the way, and when one pair had swooped about and reviled us to heart's content for our intrusion, they passed us on to another inhabiting a neighbouring field, who received us with equal contumely, so that we continued to make a triumphal progress, our part therein being performed at the car-wheels. It was, therefore, with some relief that we came upon a pair whose attention, being preoccupied with other objects, allowed us to play the part of spectators. Four

pheasants—two cocks and two hens—were widely distributed over a large field. A pair of Lapwings, probably with eggs or young in the field, resented their intrusion. I have seen some strangely matched combatants in my time, but I should have found it difficult to forecast the tactics of adversaries so dissimilar as the wild-winged Lapwing and the ground-running Pheasant. The Lapwings scoured the field with the wild, dashing flight they use in the breeding season, towering suddenly as they approached one of the Pheasants, then with a steep dip swooping down as if to transfix it with the bill; but, just as the Lapwing appeared to be on the point of striking the Pheasant—and never sooner—the latter swept swiftly round and, with tail erect, presented its bill to receive the charge. The Lapwing, breaking its downward flight when within a few inches of the rigidly set Pheasant, skimmed over it, and dashed along the field to renew the onslaught upon another of the birds. The excited journeyings and animosity of the Lapwings were in strange contrast to the indifference and self-possession of the Pheasants. For the latter fed on stolidly except when actually under attack; and although, with their labouring, dead-ahead flight, they would on the wing have been the sport of the agile Lapwings; set firmly on the ground, and with beak elevated like lance in rest, they offered, by their superior weight, a formidable butt to the charge of their assailants.

Tired of watching tactics so barren of result for both the attacker and attacked, we retired by a field-path leading through young wheat until it dipped sharply into a wooded dingle.

When first I haunted this dingle, I used to waylay persons passing near it, to inquire the name of it. I said—"It will have a name—this narrow gash in the ground; if not for what it is, then for what it is not. For plough never went over it, and never will. Each time the ploughman turns his team at the hedge guarding the top of its long, steep slopes, he must look over into the unprofitable hollow, and wonder what malign fate led Nature to drive her own plough through the level land, leaving this monstrous rut behind. And the ungathered crop that grows there is slender-shafted wildings, all column and crest; for they are like trees in a cage, close-packed, and can grow only upwards. When they fall, they lean one upon another, becoming natural ladders by which one may clamber up to count the Ringdove's eggs in a neighbouring fir. Oaks, too, are there, each in its self-made clearing, thrusting out strong arms that push aside the lesser growth, and will have room. Within this columnar framework thorns and hollies and their like claim the interspaces; and lower still, a wilderness of briars and brambles sprawls about the ground, itself variously clothed with beds of nettle, sedge and reed, and weeds innumerable. And through it all there runs a crooked stream, now losing itself in petty swamps where the Moorhen gathers last year's leaves to make her nest of many layers; now quickening between steep-cut banks where the Kingfisher winds in central flight. Emerging from the wood, it filters through a dense reed bed, and widening into lake-like breadth, embraces a willow-swept islet, ere it drains on to an

old water-wheel, whence, being delivered below, it goes wandering forth, as crooked in its freedom as in its woodland captivity.

'Such a place,' I said, 'would have a name; some old, quaint name given by generations gone; and one that touched, as old names often will, the true spirit of the spot.' But when I came to know that none—not even the oldest—had ever heard it, I was content to have it so. "It will have gone," I thought, "with the fallen leaves and moving water; and if there once was one who, in days when men lived near the soil, knew the place and the name of it, it may well have been that, grown old and strange among his kind, he held it awhile a lingering memory, then took it with him."

Howsoever it may have been, name it now has none by which one might direct a man to find it or avoid it. And yet The Little Wood is a household word with us. There exists a whole cosmography of it, unintelligible to any save ourselves, being of purely personal origin and import. It is our own by knowledge and affection, a more intimate title than any that law could confer. Still, at the entrance to it, stands the representative of law—a square-foot of deal nailed to a tree, and painted white, with an ancient legend inscribed thereon. Forgive us our trespasses, indeed; but, lead us not into temptation, we may also urge. Human nature being what it is, prohibition is invitation. "Rubbish may be shot here" would be a more effectual deterrent; or "'Ware the bog-holes" would be final for all but a few urchins who would probably get swamped.

My "better half," or whatever he calls himself,

having read the inscription, gave judgement: "Law is law," said he, "good or bad; no man should break the law of the land."

"Of the 'landed,'" I suggested. "When I gallop my hunter through this close, breaking down the briars and brambles that have cost so much time and human industry to cultivate, I'll pay the bill."

"As sure as you go in," he cautioned, "the pigeons will rise 'flip-flap' from the pines, giving warning far and near; and a pretty figure you'll cut if caught."

"And when you come out safely," I told him; "you'll be delighted to have been in, and will make up your legal conscience into a neat little packet, and put it in your waistcoat pocket until it is wanted again."

"Sir! If it were not for the close personal relationship subsisting between us, I should call you a . . . ."

"You're a humbug!"

"And you're a . . . . But it's Sunday (as far as 150° West of Greenwich, at any rate)."

We entered the wood together, not from any unanimity of sentiment, but because we are so constituted that one must for ever be upon the heels of the other.

Is there anything just like a wood, like that first shudder of the mind when one has crept in, and stands awhile to look round and listen? Here is light, but not the light of the open. Filtered through windows of living green, the impartial glare of day has gone out of it. It lies softly on what it touches—a lasting twilight, save where some yellow

shaft strikes straight through a gap in the green, to become the causeway of congregated insects. Sound, too, is there, but of a sort that enhances stillness—the low general hum of insects ; the sudden rustle of dry leaves where some startled creature hies away to cover ; bird-songs that float up and are lost in the unreverberant canopy of leaves ; the passage of the wind—a spirit, rather, formless, unsubstantial, that moves athwart material things, and is gone by a way unseen.

As I perambulate a wood, I go on tip-toe. A cathedral is a glorified dwelling-house ; the dwelling-house, a developed hut—a woodman's hut with its uprights, cross-beams and natural thatch ; the woodman's hut, a reduced wood, four-square, wattled in to temper wind and rain. The wood is the archetype of all ; the cathedral its last expression in art. So it comes that in both one goes quietly, and with reverence, feeling in one the mystery of Nature, in the other the mystery of Human Nature. Yet, rightly considered, there is no such fundamental distinction, much less antagonism ; for both are expressions of that which, including each, is greater than either—the mystery of Life. By multiplication of column and arch, by suggested height and distance, by infinite elaboration of detail, there is conveyed in the one a sense of struggle for that which is higher, afar off, hard of attainment. And, in spite of the graces of colour and uplifting sounds, there remains to the beholder in the end a dominant sense of strife, the long upward fight through the ages as symbolised by this agony in stone. The struggle is present, the sense of strife predominant,

and its hope afar off in the heavens. But here beneath green leaves is quiet; here may a man walk and be at peace. For the strife is hidden, the struggle is masked. Life utters itself in one long revelation of beauty and delight. In tree and flower, in things that fly and swim and leap and creep, in sweet scents and sweeter sights and sounds, by day and night life unfolds itself in such guise as only he who has seen can know, and he who has not cannot dream. And because a man has in him something of the child, he may find solace in these fair outward shows of things; but because he is a man. and, as such, kin to all life, he must needs soon learn that these fair externals are the last product of a world-old strife, fierce, ceaseless, universal. Then shall these peaceful haunts seem to him as roaring factories of life, grinding out beauty from the raw stuff of earth. And weighing the strife in one hand and the beauty in the other, he shall seem to see again in these upstanding trees locked by living arches, in these green vaults and drawn-out vistas, in this multitudinous complexity of struggling forms, that old agony of stone symbolic of human aspiration and endeavour. For both are expressions of the one prime mystery of life.

Advancing through the wood we came to a small clump of beeches, not the massive-boled, stout-limbed giants such as are found in the open, but the tall, attenuated forms of trees that have fought for light and shot up in eager rivalry until each spread a narrow cope to become an indistinguishable part of the closely woven roof. The musical "*Pr.r.r.ru!*" of the Moorhen gave warning of our passage; the Blackbird shot across the dingle with sudden alarum; the Robin,

starting out from same dark recess, stood, a red-breasted sentry, to demand the pass-word; while the Willow-wren, newly come from the south, sang for the joy of home-coming a song winsome with wistful tenderness beyond the singing of all birds. But it was not for these we sought the high beeches. There had come to us, half-muffled, as from some side chapel in the woodland aisles, the voice of a singer more accordant to our mood. Half a year had past since last we had heard it. But during the dark days there was no image more intimately clear to the mind's eye than that of the banished Wood-wren. And it was ever thus—a wandering minstrel in green-domed spaces high in air, a little passionate pilgrim of woodland song.

We had not long to search the softly glowing green ere the flutter of wings from one bough to another revealed the wanderer returned. For he loves not to face the broad-stretched, formless sky; but grasping some lower bough, sings to the shifting pattern of leaf and light above him. I know not what there should be in this small bird to give it such earnestness in song. Watch it as it stands with tense, straightened legs, gripping the bough with slender feet, the body drawn up, the head thrown back; and as it sings it addresses itself now toward one side, now toward another, the wings quivering, the body shaken with the stress of song. The song itself seems only partly to express the spirit that prompts it. Opening with several detached notes of the same volume and pitch, it passes into a long trill the notes of which follow with ever-increasing rapidity, though never so as to be slurred or to lose

their individuality. But there goes to the expression of it a rapture and a vehemence that fascinate the beholder. All birds have their joy of life, but all birds sing not thus. This song, indeed, seems to be wrung out with violence, almost with pain from the frail body, only the inner ecstasy enabling the singer to rise superior to the effort of utterance. And, like all efforts that strike highest, it fails. It fails as compared with the rounded sweetness of the song of the bird's own congener the Willow-wren. For the Willow-wren aims within the compass of achievement, and its song is perfect within bounds. Therefore it comes that so long as Willow-wren will sing man will listen, feeling the solace and satisfaction of perfected endeavour. No such sense of fulfilment, however, is left upon the mind of him who watches the Wood-wren in song. Nevertheless, he will follow the bird from tree to tree, to see it strive and fail, and strive and fail again—ever the rapturous body and throbbing throat, ever the crushed-up trill that seemed meant to be so liquid sweet and full. Here in little is the failure of the artist, of the enthusiast, the saint, of all who strike higher than their reach, and fail, as men count failure. And because of this, the vision of that small creature so wrought on us that, looking up into the green mist of leaves and feeling the peace of the lasting Sabbath of the woods, "*Benedicite!*" said he who went with me, or was it I, or both of us? For we thought no more of the distinctions of days and places, nor any more of divided counsels, joining issue in the fervour of that small sylvan chorister, as if it had been human, or we had put off our humanity.

THE HOME AND COUNTRY OF A BIRD.

From time to time there arise catch-phrases of criticism which, having a certain speciousness, acquire a vogue in argument not unlike that of some popular air, which comes no one knows whence, has a short, furious life, and disappears no one cares whither. Thus it has for some time past been a habit of some who sit in judgement upon works dealing with aspects of natural life, to deprecate the interpretation of the actions and habits of bird or beast in terms that are held to refer rather to human actions and habits, and therefore to be inapplicable to the case of creatures of lower faculty. There is sufficient truth in this contention, and enough ground in some recent writing upon the ways of birds and beasts, to justify such an objection. Prompted, perhaps, by human feelings, such writers appear to desire to "humanise" the objects of their sympathy, as if by so doing to bring them into closer fellowship with themselves. But such a course can only end in stripping things natural of their own individual charm, substituting for it a confused image of ourselves that is, indeed, neither we nor they. The ways of Nature's other children are only in part our ways: in part we understand them; the rest is hidden, elusive, to be sought out

and watched for; and because it is such, it retains a perennial charm. Still, in so far as we would penetrate at all this outer coating, as it were, of often inexplicable actions, we must needs employ human standards, for the simple reason that we have no other. The whole of the strange workings of those lower—or, perhaps better, of those "other"—minds; the whole scheme of their morality—for they, too, have their rules of conduct—we shall in all probability never know; but so far as we can come to know them at all, we can do so only by comparison with human reasons and human motives. The same principle of life is in us and in them, uttering itself in different ways. It would be strange indeed if, having this common origin, our subsequent development were such as to render us entirely unintelligible one to another.

Some such preface seemed called for by the subject suggested by my title; otherwise it might be urged that, in writing of the homes of birds, I was using words that, as applied to human beings, were full of meaning, but, as applied to birds, had none. Home with us is that place where we were born; where we have lived with those who made it such; where that portion of our race dwells that we call our countrymen; the place, every feature of which is familiar, as we say, extending to things outside the home the name of that which is the reason and foundation of it—the family. If we wander from it, we shall come to it again; if we wander often, and far, and in peril, we shall return to it with greater eagerness and constancy. To man, with his memory of things past and hope of things

to come, home may mean much more than this; I have so limited my statement that I may say that to the bird it means not less. But I will not ask my readers to accept such a statement without some proof. I might, perhaps, have been content to rest it upon the authority of Professor Newton, who in his "Dictionary of Birds" has stated that it is the "passionate love of the old home" that brings back the bird to its former haunts—a statement quite unique in a work that for erudition and severely judicial restraint is unsurpassed in the literature of ornithology. But I will bring the matter yet nearer home.

As is known by all, birds are not scattered haphazard about the world. Some species inhabit a comparatively limited area, and remain there throughout the year; in fact, throughout their lives. Others, having reared their young during the summer in one land, upon the approach of the colder season depart from it and pass to some other and more genial country. The paths by which such birds go, or migrate, are fixed; they pass in definite directions over definite tracts of land and sea, and arrive in definite and sufficiently well-known countries at their journey's end. We know therefore, that each kind of birds has its place or places on the face of the earth, that it knows them and the way connecting them, and keeps to both.

To narrow down the issue, the Rook, although also in part a migrant from and to other lands, has an internal migration within the bounds of our own country, and often enough within those of the same county. At the season of migration a colony of rooks

will forsake the breeding district, and betake itself to some other neighbourhood, often a near one, for the winter, to return, however, to the same nesting-trees in the following spring. Some three hundred Rooks that nest before my home, do not practise even this short migration; but after residing at the rookery from March until September continue to visit it daily through the winter, retiring at sundown to a general roosting place a few miles distant, where many birds of this kind, from different parts of the surrounding country, congregate to sleep. By this one may see that definite groups of birds have a fixed haunt; in fact, in the case of paired birds it is safe to affirm that they have their own nests, which they claim and repair each spring.

It is not often possible, however, to lay one's finger, so to say, upon a particular bird, and say "This is the very bird that left us, and it is now come back over thousands of miles of land and sea to build its nest in the identical spot it has occupied each summer through a series of years." By a fortunate chance I am able to offer this guarantee.

A pair of House-martins have for three successive years built in a stable-loft at the residence of Mr. Carse, of Stretford, Lancashire, affixing their mud nest to a beam running across the ceiling some four feet within the loft, the entrance to which is through a small door left open during the warmer months. The nest is cleaned away each autumn and is renewed each spring.

As a rule the House-martin builds quite in the open beneath the eaves of houses, out-houses, and the like, so that so enclosed a spot as this loft,

opening, as it does, upon a narrow passage overshadowed by trees, is a very exceptional place for it to occupy. The chances against any Martin building there were great; the probability of a second pair doing so in default of the first, would be remote in the extreme. In fact, the improbability amounts almost to impossibility; so that it may reasonably be concluded that the pair that yearly returns to the old site is the same pair.

Further, House-martins are to a large extent gregarious in their habits, and I know a colony containing some hundred and fifty nests in one barn, the birds returning to it spring after spring. But no second pair ever present themselves at this loft to share it with the original tenants; and as it is certain that the original tenants, if alive, would return to claim it, as is the general habit of their kind, it is safe to affirm that the pair that for three years have so presented themselves are indeed the original tenants of the loft. It is conceivable that one member of the pair might die, and that the bird remaining might take a new mate; but this would only serve to strengthen the argument that, so far as they are able, these birds remain constant to the old home. I do not emphasise this case as being in any way special, except as it affords, by the exceptional nature of the building site, and by the fact that one pair only builds yearly against the same beam, a sure means of identifying these birds through three successive years.

It is highly probable that when these two birds leave us in the autumn they become lost to one another in the general mixing-up of this gregarious

species after the nesting season, not to mention the improbability of their continuing together in the press of migration, and at a time when individual preferences are little in evidence among birds generally. It is, therefore, also probable that after having lived separately during their winter exile, they return separately to the old spot. Whether or not they do this by an alleged "sense of direction" (which explains nothing) or by the recognition of landmarks (which is memory), it seems improbable, from what we know of the exercise of memory in birds, that they ever have in mind any such image of the old home as operates so powerfully upon the human wanderer returning again to his own place. It would seem, rather, that the return is at first undertaken through a purely general racial impulse; but that as each bird proceeds, the object of its journeying becomes more and more particularised as it picks out by association of ideas its own path among objects which, when seen, it recognises as points in the track of its former flights. Only when it arrives at last among the old surroundings of its nesting-place does the bird enter again fully upon a separate, individual life.

Those who have witnessed this home-coming know what extravagance of joy it calls forth, the wild dashings to and fro along the old courses, the excited cries that accompany them. More imposing still is the sight of bands of migrants coming in from their long journey over the sea. Only recently I witnessed such a home-coming. I was out before sunrise, and a low mist covered the land, as it had covered a great part of the country for two days

previously. But a light wind had begun to play from the south-east, driving a wedge of blue sky through the grey mist. And as I went I heard the sound of many voices singing, as it seemed, a great way off. As the singing was quite unlike that of any of the few home-birds then vocal I was for a while perplexed, looking every way but up. At last I descried far up through the rift in the mist a great band of birds against the sky; and the low sun struck up, lighting the white under-parts and making them clearly visible through the field-glass. By the stroke of the wings I recognised the Skylark, and as the birds streamed along, flock succeeding flock, a continuous shrill prattle rained down to earth. All night the birds had fared above the mist-enshrouded earth, but that dividing of the mist that became for me a vision of blue sky, was for them a vision of green earth. And as I thought of the long wayfaring and perils past, the sound of so many sweet voices singing together high in heaven seemed like the song of a great deliverance. And if any find it strange that, in the breadth and loneliness of daybreak, I should catch, as it were, an inner echo in myself of the "*In exitu Israel*" of the great singer who passed through that middle world where spirits of men in bondage await release, let them dismiss the thought.

Sterner proof that birds, like men, have but one country is afforded by the history of exterminated species. Some of these, once common to the continent of Europe and the British Isles, have been extirpated from the latter. Birds of the same species may come from other lands to winter with us, the

path of their migration passing through this country; but when spring returns they depart to their continental homes. It might seem reasonable to expect that birds that came to us in the hard season, would remain to nest with us during the season of plenty, especially since birds of these same species once nested here habitually; but such is not the case. Those birds that nested here were *British* birds; their country was here; they were extirpated from it. Although the continental birds that winter with us are in no way specifically distinguishable from them, they, too, have their country, but it is not here. They have their homes elsewhere, and with returning spring return to fill them. But the homes of the British forms are desolate; no birds will come to them again.

THE PLOUGHING OF THE MARSH

The end had come at last. The fathers of the hamlet sat in council; and progress is a fearful thing with money to be had at three-pounds-ten per cent. The fiat went forth: "Let the dry land appear! (and charge it on the rates)." And it was so.

What grievance have I?—they may ask. Had not the whole parish for years past cried out that the spot was noisome, pestilential; and men, otherwise of Christian habit, risen at night to slam the window on a south wind, cursing them in their beds? Had not they, conservators of ancient custom, withstood, as long as might be, the zealots of this new-fangled cult of health? Time was men took their ague with their beer, feared God, and paid the tithe; but now, our youthful baldheads were all for health, and men whose fathers drove a team afield at four-score clamoured for education by the rates. Something had to be done. The Board School (*De mortuis nihil* . . .) had gone by the board. The great Local Board itself had been turned round, receiving on its back a more august inscription than ever adorned the face of it.

And so, with a sense of dizzy elevation, the newly constituted Urban District Council faced the agenda —Electric Lighting and Traction; Light Railways and Amalgamation; Technical Instruction and the

Construction of Destructors, following the clerk like dogs that sniff on a weak trail.

It was an innocent project "to drain and plough the . . . Marsh" that aroused in the befogged Council an enthusiasm of comprehension such as could never have been struck from minds of only ordinary density. Then the old dogs gave tongue. "The ploughing of the marsh!" they cried, and clapped their hats on, and swore, "By ——, sir," they'd had enough for one day, Council or no Council!

As an immemorial trespasser upon that particular piece of bogland, I had first wind of the project. It was, in fact, one of several estates of which I am the effective owner, although the nominal proprietors thereof hold title-deeds which yield them a certain fictitious sense of possession.

There is no law to compel landed proprietors to know anything about their land, so long as they meet the State's charges upon it; and to judge by their general attitude of indifference toward it, it would appear that they defray the cost of upkeep and administration from philanthropic motives, possibly for the benefit of such irresponsible "Jeans sans Terre" as myself. I have always given them the benefit of any doubt which might remain as to their generosity in this sense, freely availing myself of it, without abusing it. The sun rises for me on ducal acres and municipal tipping-grounds, and my intermittent tenure of either is shared by things that creep and fly with similar irresponsibility. Of the two, perhaps, I am the less responsible; for no brown rat or canny Kestrel can appraise as I the validity of a title to land forced to follow without

possibility of appeal the earth's diurnal and annual motions, and to be translated with all this *orbis terrarum* toward an insignificant star in the constellation Hercules at the undignified speed of fifteen miles per second.

Be all that as it may, I had, as I said, first wind of the impending change; for, sweeping the marsh with my field glass before going forward early one July morning, I caught the glint of steel in the sunlight where the reeds ended and the grass-clad embankment of the river began.

It was the municipal plough, lying with a list to port, like a beached boat waiting for the tide. I had liefer have seen it stranded for good, or sunk fathom deep in the bog to rise no more. How finely they build these things in this progressive age, with the finish of a lancet, to fold back the fat earth like opened flesh. Even as I stood over it, there came from a neighbouring field, itself but renegade bogland, the clatter of a mechanical whirligig that reaps and gathers, bunches and binds, and flings the finished stook to earth with American contempt. But we note with satisfaction that there is a good deal of water out, and this plough, being a dry-land sailer, will have to gather some rust before it can be got under weigh.

The sun is not high, however, when our dry-land pilot appears, and as he passes with scythe and bill-hook, we inquire if he is going a-shrimping, a suggestion that appears to be not altogether lost upon him.

The brown rats soon know of it! They like the outer ditches, which, being deeper, are seldom

without water, and, being separated by only an embankment from the river and its tributary brook enclosing the marsh, offer ready access when they feel disposed to stretch their limbs in the wider waters, or to pay a nocturnal visit to the standing corn-stooks in the fields lying beyond.

These ditches are not waterways only, but also avenues, for rank, lush grass grows as strong and coarse as reeds on their banks, and spreads to arch them over. Upon this rank growth the municipal bill-hook first tries its edge, and the full swathes fall right and left, disclosing innumerable "runs" and tunnels among its roots. There has been a sort of under-world here, with highways and byways; and even beneath the water the crossings are beaten flat by continual passage from one bank to the other.

As we watch, the snout of a brown rat appears at one of the holes now laid open to the day, and the nostrils quiver and sniff inquiringly; then he turns back, and a few minutes later, the whole ditch-end seems to know that the thatch has been lifted from their waterway. For one after another of its denizens peeps from the riddled bank, and the squeaks of others behind betoken pressure among those unable to command a hole.

Your rat is a great experimentalist. He has sharpened his wits upon generations of men and dogs; he knows more of mechanics than the trap-maker, and has given him the go-by; it takes a rat to catch a rat, or, what is much the same, a ferret; and even the latter gets his ears cuffed times enough for his educated stupidity. Your rat is also too catholic to condemn a reformation for its novelty;

he tries a new thing to see if it will answer an old purpose better. And so one comes out, looks right and left, and runs off along by the water; then another, until, thus assured, still others emerge. One swims across the ditch, but hugs the grass-roots as he follows the open path.

We lose sight of the exploring rat for a time, for above the opened ditch-end, a more than partial critic of the new order of things appears. The Kestrel knows every inch of this marshland as well as I do. She probably knows me as well as I know her, for we are generally within hailing distance of one another during the spring and autumn months. She used to retire in spring, probably to the coast rocks, to breed; but this summer she remained on the spot, possibly using one of the many old nests of the magpies. For this is fine mousing ground, not to speak of rats. I know almost with certainty that this bird has been in the habit of frequenting this spot year by year; for it has fixed haunts and regular perching places where it stands to watch, and whither it carries its catch to eat it. Like all new-comers it had to pay its footing, and will probably have to go on paying it as long as it remains. For, the river and watery marshland attract large numbers of hirundines, and many Starlings frequent the exposed mud patches. Of the former, the Sand-martins are the most numerous, and the most persistent in their attacks upon the Hawk. I do not know the ground of the Sand-martins' antagonism; for, if the Kestrel were disposed to strike, it would certainly fail with so swift and erratic a flier as the Sand-martin. Further, the nest of the

latter, stowed away at the end of a three or four-foot tunnel in the sand of the river bank, can never have been violated by a hawk. But, be the reason what it may, the Kestrel is seldom without a crowd of hostile attendants of this species in their season, and when, as is often the case, their number reaches several hundreds, darting above, below, and about it, one would expect the Kestrel to become exasperated and run amok of them, even if in futile rage. Such is never the case. Save that the hawk circles aside when the press becomes too thick, flies rapidly ahead, or darts in among the inner branches of a tree (whither no bird will follow) to escape from them, it manifests no sign of resentment. An impatient chatter may escape it now and again, but it circles out immediately, heads up to the wind, and hovering over one spot, with tail spread out horizontally in a strong wind, and depressed in a weak one, watches as if with undivided attention for its furry prey below.

In the present instance, Starlings, not Sand-martins, were the assailants. Their method of attack is wholly different from that of the Sand-martins. The latter are free-lances, and only band themselves together in irregular companies to bewilder their enemy by the very multiplicity of their attack; the Starlings, however, are marshalled in solid formation, and attack *en masse*, sweeping down in orderly flight like a small black cloud upon the Kestrel. The Sand-martins, trusting to their power of flight, will fire up at the Hawk from below; but the Starlings continue to rise as the Kestrel rises, and to hold it always shadowed beneath them.

It might have puzzled an observer to divine why the Kestrel should care to maintain its position under such bombardment from above, for below it was but a heap of some hundreds of rusty pots and pans which had been shot down there—an accumulation of years. But, a rat in a superannuated coffee pot is in his home and fortress, so long as he remains in it; when he leaves it to pay a visit to his friends in the ditch, he takes his life, so to say, in his hands. The rat knows this, and it explains the caution with which he bolts across the open; the Kestrel also knows it, and will hover about the heap for half an hour at a stretch so as to give him a long chance of doing so.

Many a time this summer I have seen the Kestrel make its catch, letting itself down by jerks from its hovering place, and then, at the last, dropping, a dead weight, to earth, with outstretched legs, and claws spread to clutch. Then it rises and after a little adjustment of its sometimes still struggling victim, grips it close like a little package beneath its belly, and makes off rapidly on a high line for home and the waiting young ones.

I should think that few persons can have the Kestrel more continuously under observation than I, and yet, contrary to the generally accepted theory that this hawk occasionally, at any rate, strikes birds, I am unable to record, after years of watching that I have, upon any occasion, seen it do so. Further, I have upon only two occasions in my own district, come upon those tell-tale circles of feathers on the ground, in one case those of a House-sparrow, in the other of a Meadow-pipit, and though this may

have been the work of the Kestrel, it is more likely to have been that of the Sparrow-hawk, which scours our meadows at times, and upon which I have come when it has been in the act of plucking its victim.

It may be objected that, if the Kestrel were not the enemy of smaller birds, the latter would not so persistently attack it whenever it appeared. Birds might be supposed to be the best judges of their own enemies; but it requires little observation to suggest that they are not. Thus, many small birds attack the Cuckoo, and that this is not due solely to the latter's habit of meddling with their nests seems probable from the fact that other birds, such as Starlings, whose nests this bird is not in the habit of visiting, will also rise at a Cuckoo as at a hawk. Further, Sand-martins and Meadow-pipits frequently mob Missel-thrushes on the wing, and the grating note emitted by the latter as they do so, by resembling to some extent the chatter of a Kestrel, possibly contributes to the illusion. To complete the circle, the Kestrel has no more determined persecutor than the Missel-thrush.

Strangest of all, perhaps, is the fact that when our Sand-martins retire, they turn the Kestrel over to the attentions of the Meadow-pipits then beginning to collect in large numbers in our open lands. To see this bird, prime dupe and foster-parent of the hawk-like Cuckoo, rise in hundreds about the hovering Kestrel, not hesitating to cross and recross beneath him in a ceaseless stream, apparently to confuse his view, leaves one marvelling at the elusive or illogical motives underlying such conduct. For, small birds are held to attack the Cuckoo

because of its hawk-like appearance; but the Meadow-pipit, the very nurse and rearer of the Cuckoo itself, vehemently attacks the Cuckoo-like hawk. This strange unreason culminates when in spring the Meadow-pipit attacks, as I have seen it attack, the Cuckoo, although the bird may well have been its own nursling, or its offspring later become the object of the maternal devotion of one of its kind.

When thus molested by Meadow-pipits (as I should have thought beyond endurance) the Kestrel never deviates from its mouse-hunting to pursue the aggressors. Continuing to hover in mid-air, he ignores the running charge of his touch-and-go assailants, at most giving sign of impatience when he darts suddenly ahead or escapes into a tree. Yet the Meadow-pipit must surely be within the powers of the Kestrel if it chose to pursue it.

Another curious attack upon the Kestrel came under my notice in this place at this time, an attack which more than ever left me wondering what provocation the assailant could possibly have received from the Kestrel.

Being on the bank of the river on the morning of the 24th September, 1904, I observed a solitary Rook bullying a hovering Kestrel with the greatest gusto. That it was thoroughly enjoying itself appeared from the cheerful "*Pr-r-r!*" with which it punctuated every descent upon the hawk. The latter seemed quite a small bird in comparison with the Rook, and was evidently getting the worst of the fray. As usual, it continued to hover, as if it would fain take no notice of the attack, and when the

Rook advanced to cuff it with its wing, gave way, gliding forward and upward. The Rook pursuing, there ensued a contest at close quarters for the higher position, the Rook seeking it in order to fall upon the hawk, the latter in order to avoid attack. Forced to remain stationary, the Rook hung with hovering wings and tail expanded and depressed, exactly imitating the motions of a hovering Kestrel. Only once the Kestrel stiffened in opposition to the descending Rook, cuffing it with an upward stroke of its wing, but it was borne from its place by its heavier adversary. In the end the Rook desisted, and circling out went off "*Pr-r*"-*ing* to himself in evident satisfaction.

It seems to be the habit of some who have written upon the habits of the Kestrel to repeat that it "appears" occasionally to attack smaller birds. It is much to be desired that each observer would state exactly his own experiences in this matter—what birds he personally has seen the Kestrel strike, when, where, and under what circumstances. Only thus can the truth be established.

The Kestrel is not our only "feathered cat." For, anyone reclining on the river embankment in the twilight, at times becomes suddenly aware that "something" has passed over him, and if it go west, the form of the Barn-owl is thrown up black against the still lighted sky as it swings from side to side quartering the embankment with a buoyant, chopping, bat-like flight. One bird has its quarters in the roof of a house shadowed by the church whose spire rises above the trees a few fields removed, and I observe that in the trees immediately below the

nightly perching place of the young are nests of small birds. About the marsh the Screech-owl flits like a ghost-bird. Never a sound from wing or throat as it flaps or skims in the half-light, watching the ground with its cat's eyes as it goes, until suddenly the silence is startled by a single, rasping yell such as might make the hair stand on the back of every mouse for a quarter of a mile around. The Arch-mouser is on the trail, and such a master of his craft that he appears at times to toot his horn in contempt of his quarry. Or,is this sudden shriek used to start any mouse that may be lurking below, so that when moving it may be more readily discerned?

I remember that when the "harvest" moon made brilliant nights in September of 1904, one of these birds came to fly at a height of about fifty feet above a grass field before my house, using a flapping motion of the wings and a lingering flight that suggested minute examination of the ground so far beneath it. From time to time it gave utterance to a rasping yell not unlike the harsh scream of a Parrot.

But upon one occasion about this time the bird indulged me with the full quality of its screech. I was reading late at night in my room at the top of the house in perfect stillness, a light burning near a partly opened window. No warning of approach was given until the Owl, close to the window and probably startled by the light, shrieked into the silent room as it cleared the eaves—a shriek, as it seemed at that hour, more like that of some night-haunting Banshee than a mousing Owl.

In late summer, the strange noises of the young

may be heard the night through in the neighbourhood of the nest. There they perch beneath the dark eaves, appearing snow-white in the uncertain light from a lamp at the cross-roads, and calling now in one direction, now in another, for unlimited mice. The sound is like a breathing snore as distinguished from a snorting or roaring one, delivered at times with vehement insistence, as by one snoring for profit rather than pleasure. Weird and uncanny as are the sight and sound of the Screech-owl in the darkness and stillness of night, they lose their terror when the birds are seen in the grey dawn still perching in their places, and calling for more supper at the opening of another day.

It is pleasant to see this bird thus tolerated in house and homestead. Time was when ignorance and superstition gave the Screech-owl short shrift; and the farmer especially, with the narrow bigotry of his kind, made away with it at every turn. He has slowly learned that Owl and Kestrel are self-supporting members of the farm staff, and that their very existence depends upon the continuous destruction of the vermin upon which they feed almost exclusively.

I begin to be sorry for my friend with the bill-hook. He is, after all, only the instrument of civilisation; he is not civilised himself. Besides, when two men have been in the same ditch, a certain fellow-feeling grows up between them. I could have warned him, when working along the main ditch, that there was a cross-ditch thatched with thick growth springing apparently from solid ground; but the sight of his bill-hook hardened my heart. I said, "Let him hew

out his own salvation. If a man will let himself out to hack the face of Nature in this way, I am not here to make it easier for him." And so he carved his way along the main ditch until he came to the corner where a willow sapling had been planted to strengthen the bank.

It was in that corner that the Common Sandpiper nested this spring. The birds used to run about on the little mud patch before the willow, jerking their white rumps, and crying "*Pee-eep!*" with such anxious vehemence that I could see into their long, wide-open bills as if they had been slit quills. Always a passenger on the river Mersey at the periods of migration, the Sandpipers this spring deputed a pair of their number to nest in this somewhat un-sandpiperly spot to mark their appreciation of man's desertion of it. The four young ones duly appeared in the fourth week of June, and it was at this particular corner I first saw them—four white, fluff-covered chicks, standing together on a little mud mound, and jerking their hinder parts with such violence that, when two collided in the act, the shock threw both to the ground. Seeing them all islanded with their mother on a mud patch surrounded by water, I was curious to learn how they would make their escape if I went near. My curiosity got the better of discretion, and in following the main ditch I stepped straight through the grass roof of the cross ditch into an indefinite depth of ooze, saving myself when sunk to the knees by throwing my body back on the ditch bank.

It was precisely at this spot that my friend of the bill-hook—but a truce to this friendship, I will e'en

call him plain Fiend—it was precisely at this spot, then, that the Fiend went below, making a wild sabre-cut at the sky as he disappeared.

He was no sooner down than a Mallard that had been lurking in the continuation of the ditch, shot up with a startled quack, and after circling twice round the marsh, slid into the water in a more distant part of it. When alighting upon water, ducks, being poor hoverers, slide down an inclined plane, and when about to enter the water, set their legs stiffly forward, expand their webs, and "sit well back," thereby saving themselves from pitching forward on the water when they strike it. I have noticed that the wild duck comes here at this time of the year, and hides in these ditches. I am disposed to think that they are really in hiding for the moult, for, as is well known, the male at the summer moult puts on the favours of the duck, and I have never flushed a bird with the drake plumage from these ditches at this season.

As if in receipt of telepathic intimation that their old baiting-ground was being violated, two Ringed Plovers—forerunners of quite a numerous following of southward-bound migrants—appeared on the morning of the 10th July. It was an early date for the return movement, for these birds were here as late as the beginning of May in their spring passage northwards. But we are never long without Ringed Plovers at the times of migration. This time there seemed a more than usually plaintive quality in their simple piping, for "a sad strain will come to the sad," as the old Greek has it, and I found myself asking sorrowfully if I should ever again hear the familiar

note in the old spot. "*Tu-lip!*" one of the birds called upon sighting me in the distance; "*tu-lip!*" came the answer of a second bird, and I caught the glint of white underwings as it wheeled across the mudbank to join its comrade.

The Ringed Plover is a companionable bird. There are birds which admit no sort of intimacy, and a Snipe, rocketing up from before one's feet, and jagging out a sort of fork-lightning pattern in the air as it darts from earth to sky, suggests a degree of familiarity with man and his ways more intimate than cordial. But the Ringed Plover, especially in autumn and when in small numbers, gives man credit for less barbarous intentions, with the result that it oftener receives the charge of a double-barrel into its small body. Yet, dead and dangling, what is a Ringed Plover as compared with the rotund little personage that faces that other double-barrel—the binocular—character and action in every line of him? Brown above and white below, with orange bill and legs, and a system of black straps across his brow, face and throat, separated by as many bold bands of white, he is at once one of the most simply marked and one of the most elegant of the plovers. How like a Lapwing's are his movements as he tacks hither and thither with a quick, running gait, stopping to observe you now from one eye, now from the other, and nervously snapping up invisible particles, perhaps imaginary ones, from the ground. But he has one action which may be called his own. He has the habit of running up to you, putting his head down, and looking up at you intently with both dark eyes at once, whilst bowing

repeatedly with an embarassing bob that seems to call for recognition. Seen thus, he acquires a peculiarly square-browed, bull-necked appearance, recalling the Blue Tit when seen full-face, an aspect that causes something of a shock in one accustomed to see it only in profile. These two Ringed Plovers remained, resting perhaps, during the following day, but on the third day they were gone, little recking of the transformation that would take place in our little marshland ere spring brought them north again.

For the Fiend had already done with his bill-hooking, and devised some diabolical means of exhausting the ditches, into the muddy bottoms of which he flung his crop of reeds and grasses that had made such a brave show above, leaving the shorn banks to bristle like a beggar's chin. He then took to grubbing up the willow saplings which lined the cross ditches, forming a screen for Snipe and Mallard that hid therein. He had not gone far when another Mallard exploded beneath him, and the Fiend's head appeared through the willow screen to watch a Moorhen cut along the raised edge of a gutter and disappear from the face of the earth. He lingered thoughtfully, and even after withdrawing, reappeared to look first at the ground and then at the sky, as if the sudden spiriting away of the Moorhen weighed heavily on his mind. At last, he gave it up and retired to his grubbing; upon which the little red neb peeping from the surface of the water-filled trough at the end of the gutter became a head; then a neck followed, and finally the whole body of the bird emerged as she started with lowered head upon a long run, hugging the willows

until, with a whisk of her white tail coverts, she shot through the first opening, and so to cover again. If there were only three miles of willows to grub, the Fiend might yet learn more than he "went out for to see."

Above him, as he works, hundreds of Sand-martins ply to and fro with their chopping, bat-like flight. Time was when these willows were the nightly resort of something between one and two thousand hirundines, chiefly Sand-martins, and often I have been there at evening to watch the birds come in and race over the water—a bewildering maze of motion in which every unit follows its own track. Only when the high clouds, catching fire from the sunken sun, had burnt themselves to a grey ash, did the multitudinous motion become an equally multitudinous sound; for the willow wands were then loaded with birds, flitting and fluttering, fanciful in their choice of a sleeping perch, and when suited, settling only to join in the excited evensong of the twittering host. In the end, with the failing light, how suddenly they were hushed—so many voices, so simultaneously! Stranger than the sound itself was the ceasing of it.

A number of these willows were cut down to the roots last year, and the birds thereupon forsook the spot as a sleeping haunt. Now they gather every evening above the river, disperse, and gather again, and so on until, just before sunset, one of their number with an insistent call-note leads the way, and all withdraw for the night in a skirmishing flight to the north-west, which is the direction of the river at this point.

Arriving Redshanks must have overlapped the

departing Ringed Plovers, for early in the morning of the 12th July, I found over a score of the former in the place just vacated by the latter.

The ditches having been emptied, the water from the flats lying between them was slowly drawing off to refill them, leaving smooth mudbanks patched and striped with shallow pools and gutters. Redshanks profited by such an invitation to come in from the 12th until the 15th July in quite unusual numbers, being joined on the first day by a hundred Black-headed Gulls, mature and immature, and by a score of Common Sandpipers and half-a-dozen Snipe between the 13th and the 17th.

When it is stated that our "marsh" is at best but a small affair lying in a bend of the River Mersey four miles south-west from the city of Manchester and thirty miles from the sea, it will be understood with what particularity we count up our rarer visitors, especially when moving in numbers quite unusual with us, and at a time when combined movement is sufficiently significant in any but a breeding area.

It is my habit to visit this strip of marshland daily in the early morning, a time when birds are always visible in greater numbers, and submit to observation with less concern, than at other parts of the day. For, apart from the absorbing occupation of breaking their fast, they seem to be aware that the world of man is not yet properly awake, and will at such a time approach situations which later in the day they avoid.

Among birds less influenced by such considerations to throw off their habitual caution, the Redshanks are prominent. "*Työ!*"—came the well known note

immediately I approached, and every Redshank was at once made aware that an invader was in sight.

This note is a clear, subdued, but far-carrying whistle, with the melancholy quality which characterises the notes of several of the Waders, and which seems to result from the gradually flattening transition from the initial note through some slight interval to a final note not determinable by the musical scale. It is thus assimilated to the more finely graduated inflections of speech, but lacking for human ears the first quality of speech—meaning, it remains an unfinished musical utterance, suspended, incomplete. In this it accords with the character of the Redshank, which is ever a bird of the distance, evasive, elusive as its own note, which goes wandering over shore-flat and sea with a clearness counterfeiting nearness. For what is distant is, in a sense, incomplete. This note is not difficult to imitate, and I can generally get a response from Redshanks when within hailing distance.

It required some inspection with the glass to discriminate the Redshanks from a body of about a hundred Black-headed Gulls present at the same time. In the end the former were seen to form a little group on the outskirts of the larger one composed of the Black-headed Gulls; for the Redshanks were not only sociable among themselves, but always showed a disposition to attach themselves to the larger body of gulls when present. Consequently, the liquid "*Työ!*" of the Redshank was at once translated into the guttural "*Mráoo!*" of the Black-headed Gull by one of the more wary of them.

Brown above and white below, like so many of the

Waders, the Redshank when on the ground is distinguished from most of them by its long straight bill and long reddish legs, besides being, in common with the Greenshank, of a more elegant and upright figure than most of its kinsmen. When feeding, it moves soberly about the margins of the shallows, picking its food apparently from the surface only. At rest, it stands, stork-like, upon one leg for indefinite periods. During my approach, I observed that one of the Redshanks swam across a gutter, and when I was about fifty yards from them, the birds rose quickly, crying "*Työ! työ! työ!*" as they mounted in tolerably high flight. During flight, the white of the lower back, of the secondaries, and of the underwings generally, shows conspicuously. The flight itself is highly erratic; now the birds circle out with wavering wings, using a deep down-stroke which gives them a hooked appearance when the birds are seen end-on; now they pelt ahead with something of the Snipe's chopping, twisting flight.

They are continually altering their formation, and do not wheel, but change front instantly, at one time their brown upper parts, at another their white under ones, coming into view with beautiful simultaneity of change. When they drop they use a swift, zigzagging motion, cutting from side to side like a piece of paper floating to the ground, but with an impetuosity which the latter naturally fails to exhibit.

Black-headed Gulls — first-year birds crudely mottled with brown and without the distinguishing black head; others, white below and more evenly coloured on the mantle, with a black terminal bar to their tails, and a darkening at their throats

indicating the incipient cap; and again, birds in full grey and white plumage, with deep brown heads, are always with us when there is water out on the marsh. On the quiet days they sit the water, stand motionlessly on the mud-flats, or sail backwards and forwards searching the surface of the water below. At times, especially on bright days in spring and autumn, about the times of migration, they rise to immense heights, soaring in wide arcs about the sky. (I observe that our Rooks also have this habit in early spring and for some time before they quit their nesting trees for their winter sleeping quarters). Even in the winter months the Black-headed Gulls come to enliven the dead days; and if there is one reason for which I could be content to see the old marsh pass away and be done with, it is that certain flat-browed villagers of ours might keep to the taverns which are their natural haunt, and no longer skulk by the river to slaughter beautiful creatures because they may do so and keep a whole skin.

The hot July sun is quickly drying up the mud, which cracks and flakes like a tettered skin, and already the plough is at work in a side section of the marsh. But a week ago nearly a hundred Swifts played up and down from dawn till dusk over the thinly-watered slime: now the fat black earth is furrowed, and Meadow-pipits, and Pied and Yellow Wagtails, which abound here in the spring and fall, turn lightly from the old order to the new. The presence of flocks of brown young Starlings signifies little, perhaps; for birds of their cosmopolitan tastes will probably be found feeding and fighting on the banks of Styx. But, where a raised bank divides

the ploughed land from the unregenerate marsh, Thrush and Skylark, feeding on the one side, attest the land reclaimed; whilst on the other, an old Snipe, with bill rammed up to the base in the soft mud-bank, declares the time not yet. But it cannot be long ere the exquisitely sensitive tip of that long probing bill will be unable to penetrate the ground, much less to discriminate as now between objects encountered beneath its surface. Snipe never breed here, but already in July they come in in small parties, becoming more numerous as autumn advances.

It was about this time that, having seen a couple of Redshanks descend in a certain part of the marsh, I crept along one of the drained ditches until I came abreast with them, finding that they had joined a Ringed Plover, whose presence I had not suspected. These three birds, quietly feeding, continued to work their way along a gutter that ran in among a plot of willow stumps, the trees having been cut down almost to the level of the mud in which they grew. Stalking the birds as they moved, I observed that at a moment when I was best concealed, they became suddenly rigid. Having neither seen nor heard anything which could cause alarm, I was at a loss to explain this quick change in their bearing, until, one by one, I recognised the forms of eight Snipe scattered around them. Like small, mute, immobile Sphinxes, the Snipe crouched among the willow stumps, and, as if coming suddenly under the spell which held them, the Ringed Plover and Redshanks stood like petrifactions. None of the latter birds had detected me; they took their cue from the Snipe, who had done so.

It remains to be seen what will become of our numerous Reed-buntings, who nest here in the reed and weed-grown ditches, with an occasional Sedge-warbler for neighbour, and with their kinsmen, the Yellow and Corn-buntings, who are regular occupants of the nearer fields and hedgerows, within easy call. Everywhere they have been flitting and hovering before the inexorable bill-hook, with that peculiar depression of the tail during flight which gives the Buntings such a broken-backed appearance. But, as I try to think, this reed-shearing will probably be but the shaving of Esau, who must be flayed outright if one would put him from his birthright. For Dame Nature favours no usurping Jacob, but sticks grimly to her first-born.

A fugitive Canary, with his greenfinch "*Tweet!*" and twitter, was a three days wonder on the stripped marsh at this time. He seemed unable to use a a natural perch, preferring with his educated taste the coping of a sluice-hole, the rim of a broken bucket, or other artificial foothold.

The Fiend scythed and burnt out the high growth in the dryer parts of the marsh, and Missel-thrushes came down in unusual force to the roast, whatever it may have been. Then the ploughing went on apace, until only a central strip, running the length of the marsh, remained untouched. That will cost him some thought. At one part it is like a little foreshore, with a thin, cracked mud-crust. Bubbles form slowly in the cracks, and burst continually with a sound resembling the beat of sandhoppers on the beach. A retriever would not hesitate to spring upon it for a winged bird, but would vanish without a yelp.

They pour cartloads of cinders into it, and the mud lips puff up luxuriously, slowly close, and compose themselves over the vanished morsel, This crust will carry nothing heavier than a bird; and when the rain has softened it, thousands of footprints show how their owners have searched the thick ooze.

Here the Dunlin comes with his boon companion the Ringed Plover. You may pick him out on the spring and early autumn passages by his vivid chestnut head, and a black breastplate somewhat resembling the black undermarking of a Golden Plover. For the rest, upon general inspection, he exhibits the mottled brown upper, and the white under, parts of so many of his allies. His long black bill is slightly decurved; and, as if he felt the lack of an almost lost hind toe, he frequently lifts his wings when passing over uneven ground, apparently to steady himself, thereby exposing their white undersides.

It must have been the attraction of contrast that drew the Dunlin and the Ringed Plover together as feeding mates; for the difference between them is as great as between the Lapwing and Starling, another strange association, due doubtless to the impudence of the latter. The Ringed Plover pecks daintily here and there, not unmindful of the lighter graces of the table while satisfying his hunger; but the Dunlin runs about with the bustling air of a Starling, tearing a tangle here, thrusting in his bill there, and between times beating a devil's tatoo with his long bill on the mud, as if he had something of a Snipe's faculty for discerning hidden treasure by touch alone. He is so preoccupied as to fail to apprehend danger

unless one approaches in the open, or there be many birds together, in which latter case, as Dunlins in flocks always act together, the principle of the weakest link in the chain comes into operation. On the other hand, when he recognises that a march has been stolen on him, he stops short with the surprise and disgust visible in the attitude of a Starling when disturbed at his feasting, and with a hurried "*Skree!*" gets a-wing with his fellows, and all circle round in rapid flight and compact order. As they go, they cant now to one side, now to the other, shading alternately white or brown as the upper or under parts come into view, an effect resembling the turning of the laths in a Venetian blind.

One morning, after all the ploughing was over, and the Fiend had gone to his own place, I went down to weigh up the possibilities of the spot for future observation. It had rained heavily for a few days before, but the ground, charged with old moisture, refused to absorb more from above. The plough-ruts were therefore filled with water, and the unploughed flats partly submerged.

As I walked along a small sloping beach bordering the latter, I was startled by the note of a Ringed Plover unusually near, and to my surprise discovered that one was sitting on the ground only four or five yards in front of me. When I stopped, it stood up, but on one leg. This is a habit with some of the Waders, but not with the Ringed Plover; and my suspicion that one leg had been shot away was confirmed by the fact that some of the feathers of one wing were turned, and by subsequent scrutiny with the glass. I went closer still, and the bird took

wing, wheeled round in the usual Ringed Plover fashion, and as I had retired slightly in the meanwhile, came to earth again upon its little beach. It liked that little beach. Lapped by the water as the breeze played over it, it was like the sand or mud flats over which the bird was wont to run with nimble gait by loch-side or sea, I hope that birds have no remembrance of things past; "loch-side" and "sea" had else been memories to break the heart of it. Now its running days were over. As it alighted, it half sank, half pitched forward on its breast, and resumed the sitting posture in which I at first found it.

In all probability it had dropped out from some passing migratory band, attracted by the water, the surface of which even in the darkest nights is never dark. One of our gunning gentry had accomplished the rest.

Maimed, and stranded here between the old haunt it has left and the far land whither some irresistible impulse urges it, it recalls other "one-leggers" I wot of, as the bells of the surrounding villages summon the good folk to their pews. Some vaunt the leg material, and some the leg spiritual, each having its high-hoppers, veritable centipedes for assurance.

I have never seen a living Ringed Plover so near, and so I seat myself on a low mud mound—the Sandpiper's old look-out, and keep it company in a way.

Should the time ever come when man, the terror of creation, recognises with late regret the hosts of fear with which he has surrounded himself, and desires to regain the lost confidence of the "little

brethren," it will assuredly be to some such birds as the Ringed Plover, the Robin, the Chaffinch, and perhaps a few others, that he will turn. These will be his intermediaries; not for any purely sentimental reason, nor indeed for any uniform qualification, unless it be a general disposition to approach him, to watch what he does, to hang about him, and give him a last chance. I have had tea with a wild Chaffinch, and given him his portion at one end of the table whilst I ate my own at the other. He himself not only ate, but every few moments darted off with some scrap for his mate nesting across the field. Then back again in the apple tree above, with a "*Pink!*" for more as he dropped to the table at which I sat.

Little need to speak for the Robin. He speaks for himself—a bird of strongly marked character and intelligence, as bold as he is confiding. If man cannot win his way back here, he may know that fear of him is in the blood and the bone of a bird, and that there is indeed an impassable gulf fixed, so that one cannot go to the other.

And of this Ringed Plover, what should one say? There he sits, some seven or eight feet from me, his head turned so as to cover me with his left eye. He is not flurried; he is even comfortable under the circumstances, as I can tell by the way he puffs out his feathers now and again, and by the quaint, drowsy manner in which he looks me up and down from the corner of his eye. He is tired; he has been in pain; and perhaps this quiet monster on the mud mound, himself something like mud in his unsabbatical attire, is not the same who yesterday

snicked his leg off with his brutal bangfire. And so he blinks at the sun, now getting high and hot; closes his eye, then opens it again, and cocks his head at an angle that causes me to look up.

The Kestrel is hovering above. She—for it is the female—also appears to regard me as part of the mud mound, to judge by the closeness of her approach. It is a grand shot, as one might say; that is, from my position a shot would blow her to pieces.

What does she want there? I ask myself, as she poises on still wings above, and a little behind, the Ringed Plover. Will she strike?—and if she does?—the thoughts form themselves without words. Well, my dear, I should recite a hurried "*In manus tuas*" for you; there would be a sudden grab and jab; and the lost leg and ruffled wing, the pain and hunger, the futile desire itself for the far land whither your fellows are gone, would cease to trouble any more.

But, whether beaten off by the rabble of Sand-martins, or minded—as I who live day by day with the Kestrel can well believe—not to strike at all, the Hawk, after prolonged hovering, worked back to the other end of the marsh.

Then I got up quietly, and the bird also rose with difficulty on its one leg, but sat down again as I retired.

I kept my eye on the Hawk as I went over the fields, and seeing it again move along toward the spot where the Ringed Plover was, I tarried too long in the lane to escape the critical inquisition of Sabbatarian eyes. In such ungodly guise little credit could be given me for a Sabbath mood.

RINGED PLOVER ON NEST

At another time I could have laughed at them and myself for the sorriest pack of pedestrians that ever hopped or hobbled this strange way of life; but the image of the hovering hawk was in my mind, and its wings widened, and were filled with shadow, covering them and me alike, so that I could not but think, as I cut through a hedge to save my countenance—Wherein will our distinctions lie when at last "The Hawk Strikes?"

PERSONALITY IN BIRDS

Personality, as understood in connection with human beings, is two-faced; on the one side it is that Unifying Something within each of us that by the exercise of memory claims our past experiences as its own; on the other it is that expression of ourselves by word and deed by which others may come to know what manner of person it is that speaks and acts. Had not we the power to recall our past experiences, each of them would remain isolated, without rational connection, and, therefore, without meaning. Still, though unremembered, it would not go unrecorded. That buried experience would, upon the occurrence of a similar one, rise again in mental association with it, emotions similar to those formerly aroused would be again set up, and we should be impelled to instinctive action. Again, had not we the power of intelligible speech, each of us would remain isolated among his fellows, without rational connection, unable to convey his meaning to them. Yet even in such a case, that association of ideas which before supplied in part the defect of memory, would now serve to remedy in some measure the lack of speech. I have elsewhere ("The Ploughing of the Marsh") referred to the influence of a number of

silent, crouching Snipe upon some Redshanks and a Ringed Plover that had wandered, carelessly feeding, into their midst. I had stalked the Redshanks and Ringed Plover from a willow-screened ditch skirting a patch of marsh along which they were advancing, feeding intently, and was surprised to see these birds, after moving so freely, suddenly draw up and assume rigid attitudes of attention. It was plainly to be seen that I was not the immediate cause of this quick change in their conduct, for beyond the fact that I was still and well under cover, the birds were tail-on towards me and evidently unable to locate the source of danger. Closer examination of the ground about them revealed eight Snipe crouching flat to earth in Sphinx-like immobility. Then I recognised that the Snipe had seen me as I approached, concerned only to screen myself from the Redshanks and Ringed Plover, and that the latter, walking unsuspectingly amidst the crouching Snipe, were influenced by their strange attitude so as immediately to assume it themselves. Here significant action took the place of intelligent speech, the attitude of fear exhibited by the Snipe arousing in the Redshanks and Ringed Plover a corresponding emotion of fear prompting them instinctively to similar behaviour.

From the foregoing some idea may be gathered as to the limitation to which the conception of personality is subject when applied to birds or other non-rational beings. Conscious personality based upon memory stocked with the rationalised products of experience, they have not; but that passive form of memory by which a present experience will release,

as it were, the latent energy of a past similar one, and by association stimulate into new activity the emotions that accompanied it—this they have.

However, it is not upon its subjective side that it is proposed here to treat of personality in birds, but rather of that objective expression of it in outward action, by which each species enables the observer to form a mental image typical of the individuals contained in it. Thus the conception of personality suffers still further limitation; it becomes, not the personality of an individual, but the collective personality of a kind.

Perhaps the broadest statement that can be made concerning personality in birds is that they fear according to their size; but, strange as it may at first seem, it is the largest birds that are the most fearful, and the smallest that are least so. This rule is seen to apply so generally that one is prompted to cast about at once for some explanation on physical grounds, since any moral analogy would lead one to expect just the reverse. Why should birds of the Titmouse tribe, the Common Wren, Gold Crest, and Tree-creeper, the smaller Warblers, the Redpolls and Siskin, approach man, provided he be tolerably still, so nearly that every marking and action may be noted by the unaided eye; whilst, with a few notable exceptions, their larger fellows, with each increase in size give man a wider and wider berth, until at last they will scarcely tolerate his visible presence at all? Some of the larger kinds practice precaution even greater than this, posting sentries in anticipation of surprise. Thus, a pair of feral Canada-geese, with which I claim an intimacy they appear to resent,

LESSER REDPOLL

never feed together. Each takes its turn to mount guard while the other crops the moist herbage at the mere side, and with straight, up-drawn neck turns its head now one way, now another, to forestall intrusion. The much decried method of comparison with human standards may yet help us to some solution.

Each man has his own physical outlook upon the world—an outlook more uniform among men than with birds. For one bird may be fifty times as large as another, and yet to the largest of these man still remains a monster for size. But a man who should be fifty times larger than his fellows, would have more occasion than they to apprehend some creature yet again fifty times more monstrous in size than he. So each bird has its own outlook upon the world; and the world of a small bird is a small world, wherein danger ceases to be recognisable beyond a radius of half a dozen yards. That is the world of the Wrens, the Titmice, and their like.

The Golden-crested Wren of the picture allowed me to photograph her at a distance of a couple of yards, although in order to do so, I had to raise the ivy that screened the nest. The latter, composed mainly of spiders' webs, lichen and moss, and lined exclusively with small black feathers, was suspended on bands of web passed over two of the stouter twigs. The whole fabric was as soft as a piece of old lace. Small as the nest was, the aperture was still much smaller, and the bird itself so diminutive that when sitting it was all but lost to sight. It required of me only that I should not be abrupt in my movements, and so long as I observed this condition, its conduct suggested that while it was

aware of my presence, it was never wholly convinced that I was aware of its own.

How wrapped up in themselves and their pursuits do small birds at all times seem to be—the Common Wren and Gold-crest worming their way through the mazy hedgerow; the Tree-creeper, gliding mouse-like up the furrowed bark of stout-boled trees; the Long-tailed Tit with its short bill pressed in apparent osculation against every spot from which it takes a morsel of its insect food; the Blue, the Coal and the Marsh Tits, clinging and clambering, parrot-like, with all manner of extravagant posturings in the life-long search for hidden food. All these smallest of birds wear in the presence of man an air of absorption in their own pursuits, as of creatures free to move interstitially, as it were, among the grosser objects of human observation. Theirs is the immunity of the very small from molestation by the very great, and if a man thrusts himself obtrusively upon their notice, their attitude is one of surprise rather than of distrust or resentment, as in larger birds. They thought they were invisible, it seems to say; they are astonished at their own conspicuousness; they will go a very long way off; and so they cross the lane to the opposite hedgerow, or flit into the ample solitude of the next shrub or tree. The Great-tit—great with a six-inch greatness—already evinces the possession of a wider horizon. If he still submits to near scrutiny, it is from a natural boldness rather from a lack of vigilance, as his often insolent stare will convince you.

The tribe of the Titmice, consisting almost entirely of these smallest of birds, becomes typical of the

GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN ON NEST

vagrom habits and vehement disposition for which its members are noted, and it is interesting to trace in the smallest birds—groups otherwise quite distinct from that of the Titmice—a restlessness and energy, as well as a social habit and perching antics so similar to those of the Titmice as rightly to be described as tit-like. Thus the Goldfinch clambering about its beloved thistle; the Siskin and Redpolls with their even more eccentric posturings at the twig-ends, are conforming not outwardly alone with the behaviour of the Tits, but exhibit a tit-like volatility, vivacity, and intensity of temperament quite foreign to the larger members of the numerous Finch family to which they belong,

Indeed, smallness in birds appears to be accompanied not only by a narrower range of apprehension, but also by an excessive energy, which is, perhaps, too generally regarded as a function of mere size. For, one is disposed to find it natural that such small creatures should be of mercurial activity, just as the smaller mammals, fishes, and insects, afford as a rule more frequent displays of energy than larger ones. But this is only to restate the case, not to explain the cause. The difference between small and large birds in their modes of expending energy lies in the all but absolute spontaneity of the action of the former. They seem to convey, without being able to control, a current that expends itself in minute, incessant sparkings ; whilst those rarer outbursts of intense energy in the larger kinds issue as the products of accumulation released of set purpose. Thus the ceaseless activities of small birds are not unlike the rompings of children—an overflow of

superabundant vitality; but the furious dash of the falcon in pursuit shows energy directed by purpose, and the period of repose that ensues serves only to discriminate such an effort more sharply from the continued, but often gratuitous, activities of small birds.

Whilst retaining generally much of the restlessness of the Titmice, the Warblers, ranged in groups each composed of birds possessing common traits and distinguished by increasing sobriety of demeanour, mark the way toward the calmer rule of life among larger birds.

The first of these groups may consist of the Sedge-warbler, the Reed-warbler, the Furze-wren, Grasshopper-warbler and Common Whitethroat, all of them birds of violent motions, that apply unbounded energy largely toward the production of fantastic sounds. They are also skulkers in reed-beds or low growth, though the Whitethroat, by his more open habits and occasional phrases of true song, forms a connecting link with the group next to follow—a group consisting of birds of more aërial habit and, for the most part, of melodious song.

It is strange that the birds of this first group, so hidling in their ways, should yet be at such pains to advertise their retreat by a garrulity unparelleled among their kind. Indeed, day itself seems too short for their garrulous energies, and of the small number of birds that are known to sing by night, no fewer than three—the Sedge-warbler, the Reed-warbler, and the Grasshopper-warbler, are drawn from this loquacious group.

Upon inspection of the six birds that I have set down together, more from a feeling of congruousness than according to any reasoned method, to form the second group of Warblers, I recognise in them birds of a more arboreal habit; still restless, but without brusquenes; retiring, but not so as to shun; voluble, but with a volubility of song that in some of them all but touches the highest of all singing. Frailty of structure and gentleness of manner are, in most of the birds of this group, allied to a refinement in song that, with their airy haunting of leafy spaces, invests them with something of an ethereal charm.

The Lesser Whitethroat, allied to the first group by his abrupt gestures and spasmodic, unmusical song, claims to lead in this second group as a frequenter of the high tree tops. His is a personality of no great distinction, and the best one may say of him is that he bears cheerfully the mediocrity inseparable from the rôle of an intermediate form However, he is not alone in his lack of personal distinction.

If the songless Chiffchaff—for only by courtesy can his speech-like "*chiff! chaff!*" be considered song—be admitted to this group, it is because his whole personality is in other respects so narrowly divided from those of the Willow-wren and Wood-wren, that it would be impossible to exclude him; just as, owing to the close outward resemblance of these three birds, early naturalists failed for a long time to distinguish them as different forms. And because these three birds are so similar in aspect and so inseparably bound together, it becomes interesting to note their points of difference. The

chief of these, from our present point of view, lies in their songs. These are so different in themselves and delivered in ways so different, that it would not be possible to select a similar number of British birds so closely allied in most respects, yet so dissimilar in respect of their songs. Although all ground-nesters feeding upon the same kinds of food, they may in a general way be said to inhabit different stories in their house of life. The Chiffchaff moves nearest to earth, uttering a perfunctory "*chiff! chaff!*" as he slips from twig to twig about the lower growth. He has the family stoop of the Leaf-searchers, but brings with him a slightly supercilious air that is his own. "*Chiff! chaff!*" he says curtly, as he bends forward on the bough, looking right and left for something that appears never to be present—"*chiff! chaff!*"—life's a bore when it's a hunt for food with never a song.

His melodious cousin, the Willow-wren often enough meets him by the way, though as a rule he ranges higher in the trees. Whether we consider the frail and dainty person of the Willow-wren, its gentle air, or its song, there is only one word that fitly and entirely covers its very distinct personality—it is just sweet. I do not use the word conventionally: those who know this bird intimately will recognise that there is no other of our birds to which this epithet could be applied so entirely without qualification. If anything must be added, it is just a shadow of wistfulness—in the last, dying notes of its song; in the slight diffidence of the bird's first approach; in the questioning glance of its eye. A wild bird's

eye!—is there any expression of itself more intimate than this? And yet, only he who has looked nearly into it knows how deep is the narrow interval between man and bird.

Chiff-chaff, Willow-wren, and Wood-wren—had man essayed to embody the diverse personalities of these three birds, so like and yet so unlike, he would have taken one stuff of Chiffchaffs, sober and plain; another of Willow-wrens, instinct with simple grace; and for the Wood-wren, some fine stuff of passion and poesy to form a creature half spirit and half bird. But Nature, cunningly simple, of one bird, as it were, made three; and sent them out so similarly fashioned that men's eyes were for a while deceived; but endowed with such diversity of song that their ears were not less astonished. And to the Chiffchaff she gave a spoken word for song; to the Willow-wren that perfect cadence each note of which is pierced, as it were, to the centre with unerring art; but upon the Wood-wren she laid the burden of a song that cannot be sung. The Chiffchaff's note is casual; the Willow-wren's rounded phrase at times slips from it automatically as the bird glides, engrossed in its search, among the leaves; but the Wood-wren sings not so. Perched on some lofty branch of a woodland tree, tensely erect and with head thrown back, he sets himself to sing. The small body is shaken as with passionate effort, the singer addressing himself now toward one side, now toward another, as an orator might do who sought to drive home his words with greater force by directing them, as it were particularly, now here, now there, among his auditory. And of all the

passion and the effort there results a song that is—curious; a shivering shake not unlike the crushed-up trill of the Corn-bunting, though the one is born of indolence, and the other is the vehement utterance of a creature visibly thrilled through with rapture. And because of the magnitude of the effort and of the inadequacy of the achievement, we write down the song of the Wood-wren a failure, knowing well the facile criticism to which such a statement is exposed. But it is a failure of a sort for which some of us would not exchange a world of melody.

If I have dwelt at some length upon the Chiffchaff, Willow-wren and Wood-wren, it is because they afford a notable example of sharp distinction of personality among birds outwardly indistinguishable by any but a practised eye. On the other hand, in passing to the remaining members of this group—the Blackcap and Garden-warbler—we approach two birds differing not inconsiderably in their outward garb, but remarkably alike in their general habits and in their songs—the latter very highly developed ones. Hearing these two birds sing, and finding their songs closely modelled on a common type, one realises with new significance what before had been accepted as a matter of course—that different birds have different songs. How came different birds to have different songs? Are the songs—as the songsters themselves are held to be—the result of variations from a common type? Can we trace the type in widely varying forms of song? Is variation observable now in the songs of birds of the same species?

Premising that difference of song in birds is in a

general way conditioned by difference in structure of the voice organs, this is yet not so unexceptionably true but that room is left for the play of individual peculiarities. It is therefore pertinent to answer that variation in song is now observable in birds of the same species. And by variation I would not be thought to mean those casual differences that may be noticed in the songs of such variable singers as the Tree-pipit, variations that are really but transpositions of series of notes in themselves invariable; or that arise from the fact that a Tree-pipit will at one time employ the whole series of its different notes, while at another time it will use only some of them. But by variation I would be understood to mean some deviation from the common form of song sufficiently frequent, uniform, and general, to save it from being held to be casual or individual. The song of the Yellowhammer may serve as an example. A large majority of these birds end their songs with a single, long-drawn note; but many times during a season I hear in some of the finer singers a second long-drawn, thinner note; and the birds that use it, although they do not use it constantly, are sufficiently numerous and widely distributed to save it from being considered isolated or accidental. This second long-drawn, thinner note occurs only after a full, vibrant emission of the common song; after a weak song it is not heard even in birds which, after a strong song, use it.

As to whether a common type may be traced in the songs of birds of different species, there runs throughout the Thrush tribe a distinctive type of song, so that one had no need to know of the distant

relationship subsisting between the true Thrushes and the Robin and Whinchat (to take extreme examples), in order to detect in the combined warble and hesitating, squeaking notes of the latter birds the typical form of song of the Thrush family.

In settling points of affinity one looks first, and rightly so, to the more lasting elements of structure; and no doubt to these is largely due the preservation of the essential character of the songs of birds of different species of the same family, so that whilst to the eye birds like the Song-thrush and Whinchat may have varied almost beyond recognition as derivatives from a common stock, the ear at once detects their affinity through their songs. By this means alone it would be possible to construct groups of birds conforming to the classification resulting from the more exhaustive investigations of ornithological science.

To answer our first question last—How came different birds to have different songs?—one may reply that it is mainly because they have voice organs of different structure. But it is not to be supposed that the notes produced by those organs are the only ones that can be produced; and thus room is left for individual peculiarities. These, however, must be subject to a continual process of assimilation by the song and counter-song of birds of the same species, so that a bird may be said to sing, first, what it can, then, what it will, and finally, what it may, a progression not unknown in human communities.

Although similarity in song corresponds in many cases with a deeper relationship among the singers, diversity of song does not necessarily argue the

reverse. For, judged upon the evidence of their songs alone, the Chiffchaff, Willow-wren, and Wood-wren—birds intimately related in other respects—would suffer immediate divorce.

Not so the Blackcap and Garden-warbler, whose songs resemble one another more nearly than those of any other two British birds. And yet, strangely enough, in all that goes to make up personality in birds, these two are so alike that their chief distinction lies in these very similar songs. The Blackcap combines with the purity of tone of the Willow-wren, the freedom, rounded finish, and some of the fulness of the song of the Chaffinch. Indeed, upon hearing the song of the Blackcap, that of the Chaffinch springs at once into the hearer's mind; but he recognises that the former is, as it were, the inner, finer core of the latter, divested of the coarser dash and self-assertion of the finch. For the Blackcap is a Warbler of the Warblers, and—for what reason it would be a long tale to tell—has with a few other important members of his class set the canon by which man judges what is best in the songs of birds. The Garden-warbler suffers by too great proximity, and the minute-long rambling of its song enfeebles it as compared with the concentrated brilliancy of the shorter song of the Blackcap.

As a third group we may set down the Nightingale, the Robin, the Redstart, and the Hedge-sparrow.

As a bird for the most part of the woodland, by the general scheme of its colouring—brown above and white below—by the fundamental character of its song, and by its low girding note of remonstrance, the Nightingale recalls some of the Warblers of our

first and second groups; by its habit of feeding on the ground, and its gestures when so employed, it shows its affinity to Redstart and Robin, as well as to the groups of the Thrushes and of the Chats, in which these features are so uniform and striking. The quick hopping gait, the sudden halt, the erect attitude and fixed gaze, are not less typical of the Nightingale, Redstart, and Robin, the Chats and the true Thrushes, than is the fundamental similarity of song in all of them saving the Nightingale alone. For, in the matter of song, the Nightingale knits up in its own person the characteristics of widely separated singers. On the one hand it retains the perfect utterance of some of the small Warblers; on the other it possesses some of the full-bodied tone of the Thrushes, though without their broken phrases and occasionally abortive, squealing notes. Its supreme quality, however, is its expression—expression in the more restricted, but deeper sense the term has acquired in musical usage. The songs of many birds are expressive in a more general sense—of buoyant gladness in the Larks; of almost aggressive ebulliency in the Chaffinch; of sheer dominance of force in the wild whistlings of the Throstles; of self-gratulatory ease in the Blackbird. But, numerous and varied as are the songs that seem in other birds to express moods as varied, there are, beside that of the Nightingale, two only that are delivered with expression in its deeper sense—the song of the Willow-warbler, especially, as it seems to me, when it begins to fail with the failing year; and that of the Robin, also particularly when in winter he perches, still and solitary, and with set

look speaks rather than sings that short strain that has in it the echo of a human regret. Both of these songs are, as it were, negative—reminiscential rather than actual. But the song of the Nightingale suggests no retrospect. It is positive, present, insistent, a passionate protest, and he who hears it may read into it what passion he will. It is of a kind with some music that exults and despairs at once, carrying the hearer away with no more reasonable warrant than its own undefinable power. For the Nightingale has taken the purity of tone and the smooth phrasing of the finer Warblers; the fire, and some of the force of the Throstle; and, with expression more searching than that of the Willow-wren, has given to the passion that was the little Wood-wren's despair, its full and perfect utterance. Still, the Nightingale, as a singer in the quiet of evening, perfect though his song may be, touches no purely human chord. Its song is an exquisite perturbation, disposing the mind to unrest at an hour when it would fain have peace with itself and cease for a while from the more clamorous moods that belong to the day.

It is as impossible to arrange birds in a linear series according to their personalities as it is to set them out in linear order in the classification of genera and species. They fall rather into groups the members each of which resemble one another generally, but may at the same time in particular ways resemble birds found in other natural groups, A truer image of the correspondences and differences existing among birds may perhaps be suggested by casting several handfuls of pebbles into different parts of a pond. The pebbles of each

handful, falling roughly together, will set up a group of circles more or less concentric, and yet individually distinct. Such a group, with the various degrees of coincidence and divergence in the areas of its constituent circles, may represent a natural group of birds with their several degrees of correspondence and difference. Further, the circles of each such group, in spreading out over the pond, will invade and in part overlap the circles composing other groups, such overlapping serving to indicate correspondence between birds belonging to natural groups otherwise distinct.

Thus the Robin, by his very characteristic gestures and the variable, warbled portion of his song, ranks nearer to the Nightingale than any other of our birds; yet the crimson breast points to the Redstart and the Chats, whilst the hesitating, squeaking notes occasionally heard in its song attest even more distant relationship to the Blackbird and the Thrushes.

But, however similar to other members of his family the Robin may in some points be, these resemblances serve but to set off more clearly his unique personality. Although a bird so unspoiled in his feral instincts that, if caged, he will dash himself to death, or starve in mute resentment, he elects to attach himself to man and his works with a familiarity that only refuses to become dependent. For independence is of the fibre of him. If you will dig, he will gladly grub; but he will not thank you to cast him his worm. Set any old pot in a conveniently sheltered spot, the bird will probably use it for nesting purposes, but lets it plainly be seen that in taking over the premises he did not bargain

for a daily visit of inspection from his landlord and relatives. He claims your respect; anything more demonstrative you may bestow upon the cat. Having an old score against the genus *homo* that it will take some time for the latter to wipe off, he reserves for himself the right to make advances. These he will make more readily if left alone. If you would give him real pleasure, go about your business—digging, tinkering, wood-chopping, or whatever be your special gift; and when he observes that you have no "intention" with him—how birds hate "intention" in man's acts and eyes—he will close in and flit from point to point to watch you. Leave your tools for a while, and he will be down on them at once. That is where a Robin meets a man. A spade handle is a consuming mystery for him. Curiosity mixed with a sense of risk marks his bearing whilst perched upon it. He flits on to it and off again, as if it grew warmer at each venture, fleeing headlong as if from perching in the forbidden tree when the human craftsman returns. There be some—not Redbreasts—who also have their "spade-handle," and seek not less curiously the purpose of the Craftsman who wields it.

Because the Robin is always with us; because he sings year in, year out; because he haunts man and his dwellings familiarly; in short, because the Robin is the Robin, and you may see him when you will and hear him when you like, he is held lightly by such as would have a bird, like a prophet, come from a distance if he would find a following. Possibly he might acquire dignity in the eyes of such if they were told that he is next-of-kin to the Nightingale;

unless, indeed, the Nightingale itself should lose that reverence they now yield as a natural tribute to what is more noted than known.

Be that as it may, those who have been at pains to seek closer acquaintanceship with the Robin know how personal, on the human side at any rate, the appeal becomes. There is a straightforwardness of fellowship in him which no other wild bird evinces in the same degree. He is bold to the point of temerity, and with his liking for any object of human handicraft, will at once enter the trap which a sparrow will regard with contempt. The proud bearing of the Thrush tribe finds in him an added touch of haughtiness as, drawn up to his full height, he casts a challenging look over his shoulder at the object of his curiosity or suspicion. His alarm-note is less a sound of fear than of protest. His remonstrance against invasion of his domestic privacy is poignant, as of rage mixed with grief. He is solitary, as needs must be one so absolute in his ways ; but he will enter any assemblage of winter birds in his own grand manner, and having helped himself to the good things going, take his departure alone as he came. When in company with other birds he acts alone. He may take flight while they remain undisturbed ; but if twenty of them show fear, he may still remain. He is a manly bird in every one of his six inches, fights a real fight if need be, and sings a song that is never twice the same.

And therein Nature crosses him, as she crosses so many other living beings, making them all of a piece up to a certain point, then concluding her

work with a contradiction, as it seems to our way of interpretation. No human mind, having planned the Robin bold, hardy, independent, would have thought to add a song that should be the opposite of all these. Yet the song of the Robin is of a wistful tenderness beyond the singing of any bird; a voice of undemonstrative regret, as it were, for things long past and over. Among other songs only that of the Wllow-wren has a touch of this quality. After that, it is heard again, but as in a greater distance, in the melancholy cries of some of the Waders; for in these there is something wilder, more detached, and seemingly of universal, rather than of human, application.

I know how easily it may be objected that the reading of the song of a bird (as of many other things) is founded but on seeming; having, likely enough, no substantial basis in the song itself, or in the mood prompting it. The reproach, however, is double-edged, cutting on the one hand against the exclusive of science, and on the other against the exclusive of art. The one claims as his province the knowledge of the world as it is; the other the use of the world whether as it is or as it seems to be. The progress of science being slow, the imagination, not less the servant of man's emotions than of his reason, casts about to express and satisfy the present demand of the former. For, quantitatively, a man's life is incomparably more of the emotions than of the intellect, He may live *for* the latter. but he lives *in* the former. And the way of the intellect is a long way, and its one goal—truth, hard of attainment. But the life of a man is short, and the emotion of

to-day must express itself also to-day by what symbol it can; for it comes not again. So that, rightly considered, there should be no antagonism between science and art, between the thing as it is in Nature and as it expresses itself symbolically through the imagination. The antagonism exists only in the minds of men of partial natures, and is the measure of their limitation. The scientist may rightly demand of the symbolist that his symbols shall violate no known fact; and the symbolist is under obligation to his art to see to it that his symbols fitly convey the subjective impression which is the raw material upon which he works. If the first demands more, it is as though he should forbid a man to call an object green because he did not thereby express himself in terms of the theory of light. This antagonism is, nevertheless, as old as thinking and feeling, and is protean in the diversity of its forms. It is the battle of half-men, always extremists, each attacking in some other lop-sided being his own deficient half and complement.

To pass from the Robin to the Redstart is to go from the original to the copy; for the Redstart is in its character a lesser Robin. But it is the Robin of the woods rather than of man's immediate environment, and as such it is a wilder bird. A Robin seeks man out, watches him, and upon occasion rates him roundly; but the Redstart flees before him, and there is added to its upbraiding notes a sob-like sound that may be heard in Wheatear and Whinchat, but not in the peremptory "*Tet-tet!*"-ing of the Robin. Its warbled song, too, is like that of the Robin, but short, desultory, and of little penetrating

power. Not unlike a Robin's also is its habit of nesting in holes of old walls and trees and in "queer" places generally; but the plain blue eggs point toward the Chats. In fact, though in its character the Redstart resembles the Robin in so many ways, in its build and aspect it inclines more toward the Wheatear and Whinchat. These three constitute the fraternity of the black mask. Present as little more than an eye-streak in the Wheatear, in the Whinchat it assumes the proportions of the masquerader's mask, while in the Redstart it becomes the full face-concealing mask of the highwayman.

It may well be asked how the Hedge-sparrow comes into such company as that of Nightingale, Robin, and Redstart. If the question were asked of one acquainted with birds in the open, but knowing nothing of the many and conflicting attempts to classify them, he would review mentally such birds as in any way resembled the Hedge-sparrow in its appearance and ways, and though conscious of no small differences distinguishing it from the Robin, Redstart, and the Chats, he would probably answer, "It cannot go anywhere else"—a sufficient indication of the value of a knowledge of the personalities of birds to those who in classifying them devote their attention too exclusively to structural elements. No amount of insistence upon "scutellated tarsi" would induce such a person to admit the Hedge-sparrow into association with the Tits, as was done by Seebohm for this reason. He "knows" that two sets of birds so utterly different in their personalities cannot be close allies.

The fact is, the Hedge-sparrow is an "odd" bird.

He has foreign relatives no farther off than the continent of Europe, but they do not come here. And so he remains alone, as a species, and as a bird. He never associates with other birds, and if he strays among them, is seen to be following his own course, and will wander out again as if they were not there. Meek and inoffensive in all his ways, he makes no enemies; solitary in his habits, he makes no friends. He has the confidence of humility, and exhibits a true trustfulness toward man, a trustfulness that may be instructively contrasted with the boldness of the Robin, often miscalled trustfulness. One may say of the Hedge-sparrow that it is, as a bird, of limited intelligence and of no great depth of feeling. The resulting simplicity of character makes it one of the most clearly defined personalities among birds; and the fact, rare enough in nature, that it rests mainly upon self-suppression, as distinguished from the self-assertion necessarily so common in the struggle for existence, makes it one of the most interesting. Of man it has been said: "The meek shall inherit the earth." The Hedge-sparrow, unoffended because unoffending, gives the saying proof.

There can be no natural termination to an examination like the present unless by exhaustion of the list of birds. It will, perhaps, suffice to mention the Wheatear, the Whinchat and Stonechat as the next natural group of allied personalities, leading on to the Throstle and Redwing, Missel-thrush and Fieldfare, Blackbird and Ring-ousel, after which we should feel that we had come to one of those full stops that keep checking one in any attempt at

classification, proceed in whatever direction and according to whatever criteria one will. They serve as reminders that birds, not having descended in a linear series, are not to be classified thus.

Beginners in the study of birds frequently express surprise that it should be possible to distinguish one bird from another, so alike do many of them seem in their outward appearance; afterwards with fuller knowledge they are equally surprised that creatures so distinct one from another should ever have been causes of confusion to them. As it is with the outward appearance of birds, so is it with their manifestations from within. The personality of each bird is distinct, characteristic. The little mind in it is ever at work in its own way, and the little will always uttering itself after its kind. But a bird's actions are the expression of a mentality and a morality different from, though in some measure resembling, our own. Hence the perennial fascination for man in attempting to trace their workings ; hence the sympathy that grows with increasing knowledge of them. If ever man comes to lay aside his gun, and desists from slaughter of beautiful and innoxious creatures, it will be because the sympathy that comes with widening knowledge will have revealed them to him as personalities, the destruction of which would bring with it something of the reproach of blood-guiltiness. This may seem heresy to-day, but the heresies of one age often become the creeds of the next.

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